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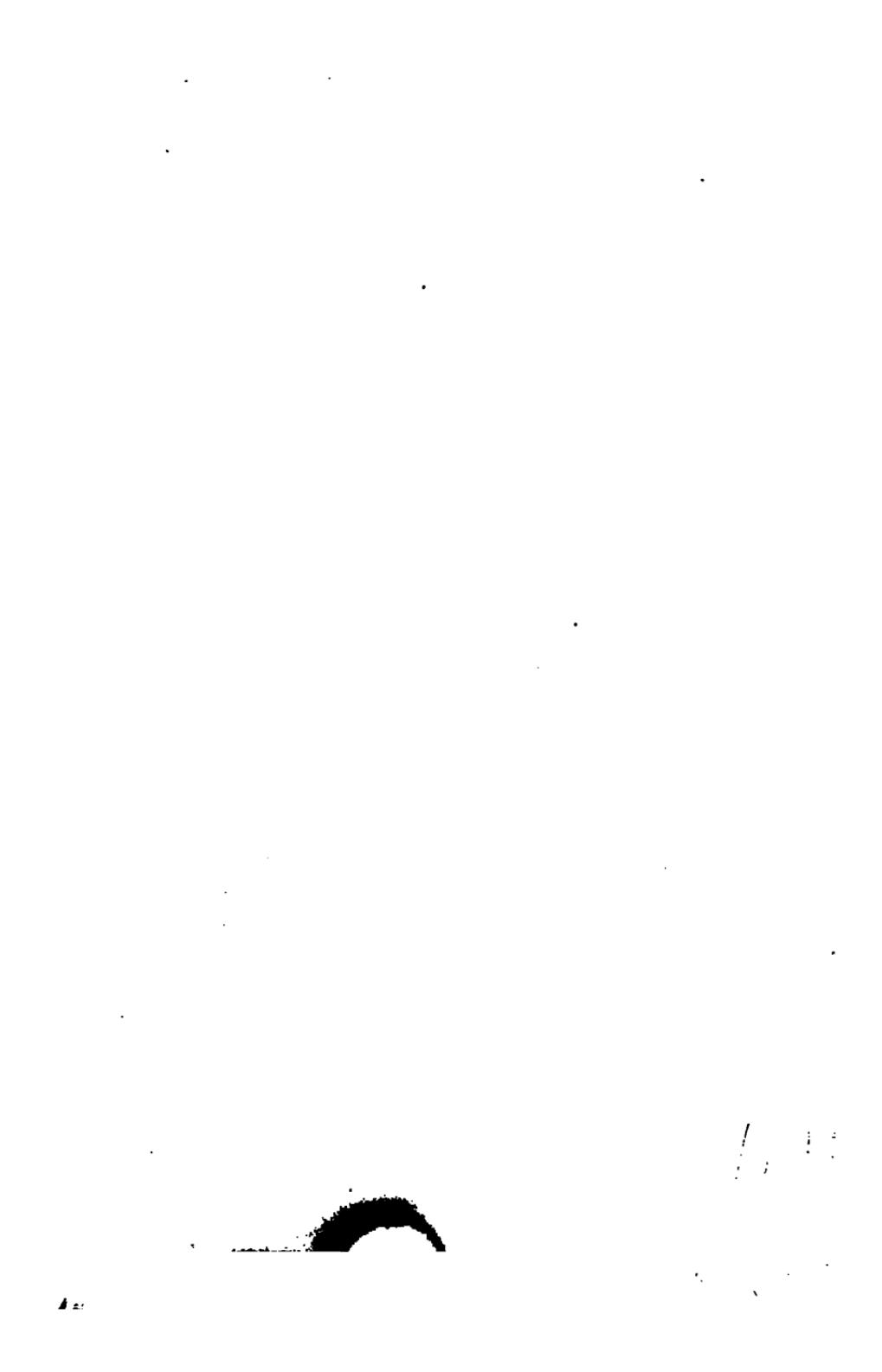
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A
WISE SON
CHARLES
SHERMAN



1758



A WISE SON

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She looked straight into his eyes.

A WISE SON

By

CHARLES SHERMAN

Author of

HE COMES UP SMILING, THE UPPER CRUST

WITH FRONTISPICE BY

ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

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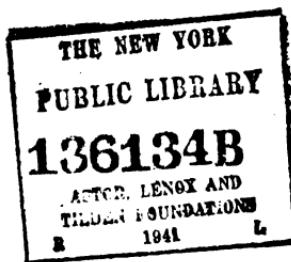
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BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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A WISE SON

A WISE SON

CHAPTER I

AS IN A LOOKING-GLASS

THE fact that Reggie was drunk would have excited no comment were it not for the time and the place. The latter was a secluded corner in Central Park, the former, four o'clock of a warm sunny afternoon in early fall. Both oppressed Reggie with a heavy sense of injustice and personal injury. None of his set had ever been known to make such a ghastly breach of etiquette as to become drunk by the garish light of day, with no man servant at hand to take one home and put one to bed. Yet here was Reggie, Reggie Van de Water Boggs, slowly, unstably, but withal sedately, pacing up and down a quiet shrub-protected path, in a secluded corner of Central Park, alone and unsupported, like any humble plebeian unblessed by the most capable man servant that ever got a temporarily damaged master home to bed in the cold gray hours of the early morning.

Reggie's attire was still immaculate, from the

high silk hat in which he had sallied forth earlier on that unfortunate day to pay an accumulation of long deferred calls, to the soft gray spats that adorned his still shiny patent leather shoes. The gardenia in the buttonhole of his frock coat was still as fresh and sweet as when fastened there by the dexterous fingers of his dexterous man servant. His pearl-gray tie with the garnet pin to match the deep red gardenia still reposed in graceful folds beneath Reggie's smooth-shaved chin. His pale lemon gloves were spotless, and he still swung with airy grace the heavy gold-tipped stick which he favored as lending the last, the perfect touch to a work of sartorial genius. Reggie was young, with rosy cheeks and fair hair. His jaw was square-cut and his chin firm and pronounced, but the lines around his boyish mouth were those of dissipation, not strength, and his gray eyes were bleared and tired, and a bit too hard for one who could still claim youth as his. They were bloodshot, now, and unhappy, as he slowly paced precariously up and down the secluded path, wondering how to get home and where home was. He knew it was somewhere, but where was that somewhere?

"Dash it," he mumbled, swaying unsteadily, "if I could only think where that somewhere is, be-gosh, I'd know where it is."

This was logical, and he pondered it seriously some little time, then raising his eyes, he saw that he was no longer alone. His sanctuary from the insulting stares of plebeian eyes had been violated. A man was approaching him unsteadily down' the narrow walk. As Reggie swayed, the stranger swayed. Reggie stopped and the stranger stopped, though he wavered still, like an aspen in a summer breeze, like the unfortunate Reggie himself.

"Bah jove," thought Reggie, "thash I when I am old. Bah jove!"

The stranger was old and thin and pitiful. His shoes were covered with dirt, and well-nigh soleless. His trousers, patched and darned, barely reached the tops of his shapeless shoes and were so very tight, it seemed a miracle that their owner could seat himself without doing them irreparable injury. His coat, originally bottle green, and dusty yellow from age, was fastened securely across his narrow chest by one button and two clasp-pins of different sizes. The collar was turned up around his thin throat to conceal whatever apology for, or dearth of, a shirt there might be below. And his old brown derby no longer had shape or color or utility. His face was very thin and the hollow cheeks were covered with a stubble of coarse gray hair. His nose was straight and clean-cut. His

A WISE SON

gentle, tired old eyes were deep-set and far apart. The heroic attempts at tidiness, at making as good a show as possible were plain by a pitiful touch here and there, the darns in the coat and the trousers, the securely fastened collar, and a tiny faded geranium, picked up in the alley behind some florist's, and thrust jauntily through one of the clasp-pins. Beneath the remains of the derby, the old gray head was carried with the grace and indomitable courage of a gentleman of fifty years ago.

Looking into the gentle, bleared old eyes, perceiving through some still unbefogged sense, the jaunty debonair carriage, Reggie saw himself some twenty years hence, a gentleman gone to seed, down in the gutter and making a last brave fight to hide the gutter stains; friendless, penniless, old, but remembering in the clouded rum-sotted brain, the name once borne so proudly, the blood that had held its own among the best, a gentleman still.

"The power of drink—hic—bah jove!" mumbled Reggie. "Thash I, forty years from now, begosh." He waved one pale lemon glove, swaying precariously. "Hello," he called. "Power of drink."

The stranger removed his hat, laid it against his

heart and bowed low with an agility that just saved him from landing at Reggie's feet.

"Sir," said he, "your servant."

Reggie removed his high silk hat and returned the salute, gravely, pompously. "The honor — hic — ish all mine," said he, with another lofty wave of the lemon glove.

"Mine," protested the stranger and precariously bowed again.

"I never met myself before," said Reggie slowly, replacing his hat at a rakish angle on his yellow hair.

"You are forshunate," said the stranger. *In vino veritas.* "I meet myself quish frequently, but nosh so frequently as in the past."

Reggie held forth his hand and the stranger put his own in it, old and wrinkled and thin. They shook hands gravely for some little time. Then Reggie dropped the stranger's and felt vaguely in the breast pocket of his pearl-gray waistcoat. Presently he drew out two cigars and majestically offered the stranger one. The old man having nothing he could offer in return, waved it aside gently, regretfully.

"Believe me, my dear sir, but I do nosh indulsh. Docshor's orders." He tapped the front of the

shabby, bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat with a gesture of significant resignation.

"Docshors," said Reggie earnestly, "all squashas."

"Jus' so. Jus' so," agreed the other. "Bush my health sush, I mush, mush restrain myself."

"Youse myself," argued Reggie. "I never restrain myself, believe muh."

The stranger raised his hand and felt briskly in the remnant of a pocket that still adorned his coat. "Unforshunate misshake," he mumbled. "Pocketbook nosh here. But, my dear sir, I am nosh myself. I am Misher Timothy Marshall Payne, at your service."

He bowed again and Reggie bowed again, both tottering dangerously, and once again they shook hands.

"Mish Timsy Payne," said Reggie. "Proud to know you, sir. I am Weggie, Weggie Van Washer Bosh, of New York. New York! Bah jove, thash where I live, New York. Ha, ha."

"I am honored, sir," said the stranger, "honored."

Once more they shook hands, slowly and solemnly.

The haze of early autumn was in the air, mingled

with the crisp odor of burning wood. The leaves were falling, slowly, sear and yellow, covering the lawns and piling in windrows in the gutters along the paths, while here and there through the baring branches, a maple still flamed scarlet in the purple distance, and a bed of wine purple asters shaded into the yellows and browns of shrubs and bushes. The path was secluded, but now and then a glimpse could be obtained of a near-by driveway with the occasional flash of a passing motor or the rarer and more leisurely appearance and disappearance of a smart pair of horses, stepping swiftly with the jingle of silver-mounted harnesses and the tingle of the coming winter to set their blood dancing. The squirrels whisked here and there, busy with the preparations for the cold that was almost upon them. And once, far overhead, passed a wild goose, flying southward.

A squirrel flitted across the path with a flourish of its long bushy tail, and Reggie told himself, firmly, earnestly, that it was a squirrel, a brown squirrel, alive and acting perfectly naturally, as every other squirrel would and did act. He knew, besides, that it was a bona-fide squirrel, which would have felt soft and warm and hairy had he stooped quickly enough to pick it up, for it was only four in the afternoon, and purple squirrels with

crimson tails, skipping in pairs, were never seen until long after dark. The stranger tapped his arm as he stood sucking the top of his cane and concentrating his eyes, his attention and all of his logic on the squirrel.

"A squirrel?" questioned the old man and added hastily, to hide the query in his voice, "Interesting little creatures."

Reggie turned his glance quickly, hopefully upon the thin pitiful face of the stranger and for a moment their eyes clung, desperately, questioningly. Yes, it was a squirrel for only one had been seen and besides, the shameful fact that it was no later than four in the afternoon, precluded the possibility of its being anything else but a squirrel.

Only four o'clock and Reggie Van de Water Boggs was drunk, undeniably drunk. Reggie gazed at the stranger miserably, like a hurt child. Who could have been so unkind as to have made him drunk at four in the afternoon, and left him alone in Central Park, far from the ministrations of the capable Dobbins or of any of his friends? He was all alone but for this stranger, the one and only true and faithful friend he had in the world. A proverb fitted this sad occasion, but what was it?

"A friend drunk ish a friend in — in —"

"Drink," suggested the stranger to help him out.

"Yes, yes," agreed Reggie. "Thash ish it—hic—a friend drunk, a friend forever." And he began to cry.

Again the stranger tapped him on the arm, this time motioning with one old wrinkled hand, in the bottle-green, dusty-yellow, badly frayed coat sleeve, to an adjacent bench. "Le' sit down," said he. "Only way to injoy nashure, sish down."

Reggie allowed himself to be led, swaying, to the bench, and with rare nerve, slowly, hesitatingly, carefully, sank upon the bench by the side of his one and only true and faithful friend.

"When a man's so dash rish, the odds are ten to one on the camel, whash the use of being good?"

He drew his handkerchief, rested his elbow on his knee and burying his eyes in the silken folds, wept copiously, long-drawn sobs of manly grief.

His companion laid his hand gently on the bent shoulder and sniffed audibly.

"My poor young friend, my poor young friend," he murmured.

Under the influence of this kindly sympathy, Reggie sobbed on. "S'pose I am good, s'pose I refuse more—hic—than five shighballs a day, whash use would it be, whash use? Tell me thash."

"None at all, none at all," crooned his comforter.
"If I had a handkerchief, I would weep with you."

"My only true friend," sobbed Reggie. "Share—hic—mine." He held it forth blindly, head still bent beneath the storm of grief that had assailed him.

"Turn and turn aboush ish nosh merry-go-round, bush perfec' love," sobbed his companion, taking the handkerchief and burying his bleared old eyes in the voluminous softness.

"Noshing perfec'," wailed Reggie.

"Noshing but the word," agreed Timothy.

"S'pose I give up all shighballs," moaned Reggie, reaching blindly for his turn at the handkerchief, "with my money, whash good would it do?"

Timothy wiped his eyes on the old ragged coat sleeve and tapped the bowed Reggie on his shoulder. "Marsh my words," said he solemnly. "Drink all you can now. You will need it bime by."

"Can't go to Heaven," sobbed Reggie.

"Can't possibly," agreed Timothy and took the handkerchief.

"Can't give my money away," wept Reggie.

"Can't possibly," agreed Timothy.

"Give it all to one man, and send him to hell, place of me. Can't do thash, hic. Wouldn't be kind."

"No," sobbed Timothy. "Can't possibly."

"Can't give it away, a dollar a person, make paupers, fifteen million paupers." And Reggie reached wildly for the handkerchief.

"Can't endow colleges, make scientishs, five hundred scientishs a year," sobbed Timothy.

"Better make paupers," wailed Reggie.

"Mush better," agreed Timothy.

"Simply got to go to hell," groaned Reggie.

"I am worsh off," sobbed Timothy, suddenly oppressed with his own woes. "I've got to go to Heaven — hic — and think of the people thash will be there."

Reggie gazed a moment at this picture of grief beside him, then threw his arm over the faded, bent old shoulders. "Too bad, too bad," he soothed in his turn. "I'm sorry for you, old man, I'm sorry, bah jove!"

"Haven't a cent," wept Timothy, "nosh a cent. Can't make any, can't find any. Have to go to Heaven."

"Bah jove!" repeated Reggie, awed, forgetting his own sorrow in the face of this greater misfortune.

" Whash the use of being good here, when I'll —
hic — have to be good bime by? "

" Bah jove! " said Reggie, appalled by the pre-dicament.

" Simply have to be good," sobbed Timothy.
" Have to wear a harp and play a halo."

" Play a halo and wear a harp," corrected Reggie.

" And sing," added Timothy with fresh sobs.

" If I gave you some money," suggested Reggie tentatively.

" Make me a pauper," wept Timothy.

" Yes, yes," agreed Reggie. " Can't do thash —
hic."

" Can't possibly," wailed Timothy.

" S'pose I give you all my money," ventured Reggie, after pondering the unfortunate situation for some little time, frowning sternly at the leaves at his feet and sucking the handle of his heavy stick as he sought to find some relief for his one and only true and faithful friend.

Timothy, old and thin and bent, with the soft sun-shine of the autumn day falling through the branches overhead on his shabby, broken old derby, on his neck where the scant gray hair overlapped the fraying up-turned collar of his bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, shook his head in hopeless negation.

"Can't take it, can't possibly 'cause then you would have to go to Heaven."

"Bah jove!" said Reggie.

The situation seemed past mending, absolutely hopeless. He sucked the head of his stick again as he gazed off through the golden haze, between the tree trunks, to a distant glimpse of the tiny lake. No help anywhere for the poor old man by his side, no help, bah jove! Simply had to go to Heaven, wear a harp—no, no—play a halo—dash it, who ever played a halo—wear a harp and play—bah jove! How did it go? And in the midst of his growing confusion, an inspiration came like a ray of light through a dirty window of a long closed attic. Bah jove! He could help his one and only friend and no one could yet say that Reginald Van Washer Bosh had gone back on a friend, bah jove! He turned to his companion and gently tapped the knee of the faded greasy trousers.

"Listen," said he gravely. "Can't give you all my money, 'caus you wouldn't want to send me to Heaven and wouldn't take it."

"Can't possibly," sobbed Timothy, head still bent, eyes still buried in the voluminous folds of the silken handkerchief.

"Can't give you some, 'caus it make you a pauper."

"Can't possibly," agreed Timothy.

"But—" Reggie paused impressively, adding slowly with a tap on the thin old knee for each momentous word, "I can adop' you."

Timothy raised his dazed bleared eyes and considered the words and the speaker in a moment's doubtful silence.

"'Dop' me?" he repeated.

Reggie nodded. "Certainly. People 'dop' children. I'll 'dop' a fasher."

CHAPTER II

THE ATTIC FLOOR

“WELL?”

“I’ve been ‘rested, I’ve been vash’nated, I’ve been poor,” confessed Timothy with feeling, “but I’ve never been ‘dopted.”

“If you were my fasher,” said Reggie with truth convincing logic, “I would be your son.”

“And if you were my son,” said Timothy, equally logical, “I’d be your fasher.”

“Couldn’t possibly go to Heaven,” said Reggie encouragingly.

“Couldn’t possibly,” agreed Timothy frankly.

With one accord they rose and hand in hand, Timothy carrying the handkerchief, streaming from limp fingers like a discouraged flag of truce, they staggered down the sun-flecked walk to the intersection of the driveway. Reggie’s high silk hat was balanced waggishly at a precarious angle, kept on by that invisible attraction which keeps the poverty-stricken wretch clinging to the ragged edge of nothing. His tie was frankly under one ear, and one pale lemon glove was missing, having been

left behind in the heat of emotion. Timothy's hat was pushed on the extreme back of his head and the geranium, faded when he had surreptitiously picked it up behind the florist's, was gone, but otherwise he looked the same for it had been impossible for him to look worse.

An empty taxicab came in sight at that fortunate moment and Reggie hailed it by an airy wave of the lemon glove. It stopped and the driver gazed a second at the incongruous pair before him, then hastily scrambled from his seat and jerked open the door of the cab.

"Here you are, gov'ner," said he, grabbing Timothy by the arm. "Bend your head and in you go."

With more speed than deference he got Reggie in beside Timothy and slammed the door.

"Where to, gov'ner?"

"My lawyers'," said Reggie coldly, and waved him haughtily aside with the hand in the pale lemon glove.

"Any particular address?" asked the driver, anxious to be gone lest a policeman arrive on the scene and relieve him of his fare.

"Certainly," said Reggie more coldly. "His office."

"What street?"

Timothy leaned forward with the airy condescen-

sion of one familiar by daily use with motor-cars and liveried lackeys. "One hundred and seventy-eight Second Avenue, my man," said he and leaned impressively back against the shabby but comfortable upholstery of the taxicab.

The driver crossed the Park and made for Sixth Avenue. He felt instinctively that Reggie was some one of importance and he did not wish him to be recognized on a more popular thoroughfare and taken away by his friends. One hundred and seventy-eight Second Avenue was down in the lower East Side and would necessitate a long ride and a big fare. He had not the slightest doubt that neither of his passengers wished to go there, but it was the address given and the police could not blame him if he took them there. Reggie sank into a moody silence, sucking the head of his stick and frowning sternly at the floor. Timothy, under the impression that he was the president of the United States, reclined gracefully in his corner, rising every once in a while to bow haughtily to right and left.

One hundred and seventy-eight Second Avenue was an old, drearily run-to-seed office building which had once been a dwelling-house. It was crowded in between two tall factories. The basement was occupied by a cheap restaurant, smelling strongly of liquor and stale cabbage. On the floor

above was a shipping firm in a crowded dirty set of rooms which had been the living rooms of the house and occupied the whole of the first floor. On the rest of the narrow floors, employment bureaus dark and dismal and depressing, cheap firms of garment makers, fortune-tellers, struggling photographers and embryo businesses of every kind and description, proclaimed their ambitions by cobweb-covered signs on filthy windows and doors.

The cab stopped and Reggie alighted, too hopelessly befuddled to notice the strangeness of the locality. But Timothy was right at home. Two blocks up was the bread-line he condescended to patronize when night found him in that neighborhood. A few blocks farther down was a tumbling old warehouse where he occasionally spent the night when luck favored him and he was able to slip by the policeman on the beat. While on the sixth and last floor of 178 itself, resided, more often only existed, his friend and helper, Patrick O'Brady, lawyer and philanthropist.

The hall of the top and attic floor was long and low, with a blackened ceiling and dirty bare floor. It began with the rickety door of the front room, on which was tacked a sign bearing the information that for fifty cents one's past, present and future would be revealed, money returned if not satisfied.

It ended at the extreme rear of the house at another door, equally scratched and sagging and with a corresponding sign which read, "Patrick O'Brady, Counselor-At-Law." There were other doors on the left, all dingy, broken and infinitely depressing. But the long hall was empty and each door closely shut upon whatever secrets of poverty and misery it guarded.

Timothy knocked on O'Brady's door, and without waiting for an answer, opened it and stood aside to bow Reggie in with the gentle courtesy of one welcoming an old and honored guest to his ancestral halls. Reggie paused a bit diffidently on the threshold, for Patrick O'Brady, attorney and counselor-at-law, was at that precise and unfortunate moment in his shirt-sleeves, cleaning his coat with a piece of flannel and a dime's worth of gasoline.

His waistcoat, neatly darned, with a back of checked calico where once black lining had been, hung limply from the back of one of the only two chairs the room contained, and reeked of gasoline and washing soap. Drunk as he was, Reggie hesitated, blushing painfully at thus intruding upon a man in the intimate and intricate process of his toilet. So, hesitating, blushing, swaying, he stood in the doorway, hat on one side, tie under one ear,

mouth open, and Patrick O'Brady, glancing carelessly up from his cleaning with a warning admonition to shut the door before the "old girl" smelt the gasoline, beheld his visitor and stared, coat in one hand, bit of a rag in the other.

At the first glance he recognized Reggie. Patrick prided himself on knowing by sight all of the rich and great of New York, and better than all of the others, he knew Reginald Van de Water Boggs, with his millions, his clubs and his countless racy episodes. And there he stood, a bit the worse for too much refreshment, perhaps, but none other than the notorious Reggie, society man and Bowery hero.

Patrick slipped on his coat and advanced haughtily, an expression of deep and profound gravity on his thin young face, a look of thought and preoccupation in his merry boyish eyes, as though he had been interrupted in the midst of settling matters of national importance.

"Me business face," he had explained once to Timothy when the latter had seen it for the first time and inquired if he were ill.

He waved coldly toward the chair unadorned by the waistcoat and gazed indifferently out of the window as though his thoughts were not wrestling with the painful problem of how to dispose of the

gasoline and newly cleaned waistcoat without calling undue attention to their unfortunate presence.

Reggie was still more embarrassed. He had never before encountered such dignity and it crushed him with the weight of his own unworthiness. But nothing crushed Timothy. Thoroughly happy and long accustomed to the odor of gasoline in a close room with wet and drying garments draped over bureau, chairs and bedstead, he advanced gaily into the shabby little room and took upon himself the duties of master of ceremonies.

"Pat," said he, with a wave of his hand toward Reggie, clinging to the door-post as a man will to his last dollar, "my friend, Misher Reshinal Van Washer Bosh. Misher Bosh, Misher O'Brady."

"Glad to know you, bah jove," said Reggie, holding forth a limp hand.

"Glad to know you," declared Mr. O'Brady, and condescended to give the hand a warm shake. "Come in and sit down."

He pushed forward the chair that was not serving as clothes-horse and as Reggie sank into it, drew a sigh of relief and hastily shut the door. Gasoline was strictly forbidden in the house for any purpose whatever and with four weeks' rent already due, Patrick preferred not to have the odor permeate through the hall, down the narrow well of the stairs

to the regions below where the landlady lived. Her irate appearance at this precise moment before he had learned the purpose of this remarkable visit, would be tragedy, nothing else. He took the other chair with a bold simplicity that he hoped would serve to distract Reggie's attention from its improvised duty as clothes-horse and drawing it up to the table, turned it in such a way that the chair's back and the appended waistcoat were concealed entirely by his own gaunt outlines. In the excitement that rose and fell in his bosom, Timothy was wholly forgotten, and the miracle that had brought him and Reggie there together and clearly on the same errand was brushed aside as of no importance. Patrick leaned sociably forward, quietly and with rare nerve pushing aside the can cover of gasoline.

"I had to fill my car this afternoon," he explained frankly as one gentleman to another. "I caught the overflow in that old can cover and brought it up-stairs. I do not like to have it spilt on the floor of the garage. There is always so much danger of fire, you know."

Reggie nodded, vaguely depressed by the room and the all-pervading odor of gasoline.

"I do not keep a man," went on Patrick, proudly refusing to be ashamed of his poverty, to try to conceal it as many a smaller soul would have done.

"I can't afford one, besides, the care of the car is interesting and gives one a chance to relax, to change one's thoughts you know, and not grow solemn and depressed with all the distressing stories a lawyer, who has any success at all, is bound to hear."

"Jus' so, bah jove," agreed Reggie, depressed to the verge of tears, and unaware of the fact that he had the honor of being Patrick's first and only client.

"Heaven's all right," interrupted Timothy from the cot where he had seated himself. "But think of the people there! And I have to go."

Patrick laughed, a good-natured boyish chuckle, and glanced tenderly at the forlorn old man on the cot. Recalled to the purpose of his visit, Reggie took his stick from his lips and turned to Patrick.

"Misher — miser —"

"O'Brady," assisted Patrick.

"Jus' so," said Reggie. "Misher O'Brady, I am going to 'dopt Timsy as my fasher and I want you to draw up the nes'sary papers."

Patrick O'Brady sought to conceal his surprise but failed utterly. "Adopt Timothy," he stammered, looking from Reggie to Timothy and back again.

"Certainly," said Timothy sternly from the cot.

"Mosh certainly," declared Reggie.

"But—er—" stammered Patrick, unable to bring his scattered wits together and meet the occasion as it should be met. "But adopt a father—"

"Certainly," repeated Timothy sternly.

"Mosh certainly," reiterated Reggie, offended.
"If I can 'dopt a child, I can 'dopt a fasher."

"Certainly," agreed Timothy.

"Mosh certainly," declared Reggie.

Patrick O'Brady looked from one to the other with a gleam of determination in his blue eyes.

"Certainly," said he in his turn after a moment of thought. "It can be done. It seldom is, but I can arrange it for you."

"Do so," commanded Reggie with a lordly wave of the lemon glove.

"It will take money," said Patrick slowly as though this were an unsurmountable difficulty.

"How much?" asked Reggie shortly, feeling uncertainty for his pocketbook.

"Quite a good bit," warned Patrick, his bright eyes on Reggie's face, trying to determine into how big a financial benefit he could turn this rare and never again to be repeated opportunity.

"Money," said Reggie solemnly, "no account — hic."

"No account, no money, no money, no account," explained Timothy from the cot.

"Certainly," agreed Reggie.

"Mosh certainly," declared Timothy.

Patrick leaned back in his chair and strove heroically for self-control. His eyes gleamed and his temples throbbed, while his throat seemed to catch and choke him as he opened his mouth and licked his dry lips.

"My—my fee—" he stammered nervously, "my—fee—is—five—hundred dollars. Can't take a cent less."

His hands in his shabby pockets twitched unseen and he gazed desperately out of the window, across the well of the buildings to the rusty fire-escape opposite, with its festoons of filthy rags drooping drearily in the fading daylight.

"Certainly," said Reggie.

"Mosh certainly," agreed Timothy.

Patrick let the legs of his chair fall with a crash and laughed shakily, hysterically. God, to have some money again, some ready cash! His soul, so long in the prison pen of poverty, stood a moment in the blessed freedom of the open door.

"Besides my—fee," Patrick went on boldly now, "I must have enough for the registration fee

and other various items of expense I will necessarily be under."

"How much?" asked Reggie, opening his check book and glancing at Patrick.

"One thousand dollars," said Patrick O'Brady with rare nerve and a steady voice, looking straight at Reggie without the flicker of an eyelash, now that the crisis had arrived.

By strenuous mental and physical exertion, Reggie ruined a dozen checks, but managed at last to fill in one correctly by the sheer hypnotic power of Patrick O'Brady, mingled with his earnest verbal exhortations and explanations. When the last stroke was complete, Patrick took the book himself and slowly, reverently, tore out the check, gazed at it a moment in loving wonder, and then deposited it in his worn old pocketbook.

"One moment," said he hastily, as Reggie rose unsteadily to depart. "I have to have the written consent of both of you."

He cleared a space on the table and laboriously, nervously, painfully, wrote and rewrote, scratched and blotted and spoilt, until in his excitement he composed a document that satisfied him.

"Sign here," said he, and by pure luck Reggie signed without blotting the paper.

"Le's eat," suggested Timothy, having signed in his turn. He had had no lunch, and a breakfast that consisted principally of wishing for more.

"Yes," said Reggie. "Le's eat."

Patrick caught up his hat before either could object, and hilariously indifferent to the freshly cleaned waistcoat hanging on the chair-back, hurried out.

At the head of the stairs, he met Mrs. Russell — known as Madame Russelli during business hours — the tenant of the front room, who for the small sum of fifty cents laid bare one's future. She was short and fat and shabby. A limp bonnet hung rakishly over one eye, a worn black jacket, shapeless and greasy, concealed a vast deficit in waist, while her skirt, spotted with time, sagged drearily behind. The flesh on her fat cheeks was flabby and unhealthy, her old mouth drooped drearily at the corners and her stoical old eyes, tear-washed to a neutral nothing, looked patiently, hopelessly unhappy. A loaf of bread protruded from the brown wrapping paper under her arm and a dime's worth of tea in a small paper pag and a greasy pat of butter were in one hand, her empty one resting on the dirty banister rail, as she looked at Patrick drearily, stolidly. All the banners she flaunted so bravely

in the face of the world during the day were down now and dragging in the dust. She was just a tired old woman, worn and poverty-stricken.

"Hullo," said Patrick.

She nodded, pushing out her purple old lips and panting before she could get her breath to speak.

"Going to get supper?" asked Patrick, nodding at the bundles in her hand.

"No," said she tartly. "This is some stuff I bought me for a dress."

She was worn out, her nerves rasped to the breaking-point. Womanly graciousness is generally a matter of circumstances.

Patrick laughed and patted her fat old shoulder. "Put up your bundles and have dinner to-night at my expense."

"On what besides the table?" she asked with a sneer. She would have sneered at Christ himself had He come to her then with empty hands.

CHAPTER III

ON BOARD THE HELEN

PATRICK drew forth the thin pocketbook, extracted the precious check and held it triumphantly before her face.

"We're going to have some feed to-night," he declared.

She read the check slowly and then glanced at him dryly. "Don't be monkeying with the law," said she. "It doesn't pay, not in the long run. I know. You're young yet, Pat. Wait until you're old and hopeless like me before you run the risk of free board and lodging for life."

"It isn't forged," declared Patrick. "It's the real thing, sure. Boggs himself is in my room. He wanted some legal advice and he came to me."

"Must be crazy or drunk," she said coldly.

"Drunk," admitted Patrick, and added hastily, "but not so you would hardly notice it."

"Has got some silly fool of a girl into trouble, I suppose," said Madame. "Wants you to get him out of it. What are you going to get to eat?" she added, feeling that the moral aspect of the affair

was no concern of hers and glad to accept an offer to a meal.

"Oh, some bologna and cheese and cake and beer," said Patrick vaguely, running over the articles he had become used to.

"Get some meat," suggested Madame. "I haven't had a decent piece of meat for months."

"Sure! I'll get lamb chops, and fried potatoes. Spigleheimer fries potatoes to beat the band."

Madame's tired eyes brightened and she nodded almost gaily, her bonnet lopping still farther side-wise. "I'll fry the meat if you like," said she, "and bring it to your room."

She turned to her door and Patrick clattered on down the stairs.

He returned to his guests laden down with bundles and followed by Annie, the restaurant keeper's daughter, equally burdened.

Annie was tall and thin and wholly colorless, from her pale straight hair down the length of her limp faded dress to her clumsy shoes. Her hair was drawn so far back off her forehead it seemed to be lifting her narrow, colorless eyebrows in an expression of constant surprise, and it protruded behind in a perilous effect of momentary collapse, bolstered by a cheap colorless barrette and laden down above with a choice assortment of bale-rope

curls. Her pale thin face was utterly, completely, hopelessly blank. Her small eyes apparently looked at, into and beyond everything, her narrow colorless lips hung weakly and her long prominent jaw was moving with the steady precision of a cow chewing its cud. It moved slowly, automatically, stopping occasionally to allow her to mouth her gum with a soft sucking sound, and then went on, rhythmically, steadily, endlessly. She carried the numerous bundles entrusted to her with an apparent unconsciousness of their presence, holding them slackly, exactly as they had been placed in her arms.

Crackers, slipping, one by one, from a bag, left a trail behind her down the five long flights of stairs. Each fell with a bit of noise that caused her to glance down at it a moment over her shoulder and then proceed with a hitch of her long arms that in no way rectified the trouble. With every step the bundles slipped nearer and nearer to destruction. She pushed Patrick's door open with her foot and stood on the threshold, staring frankly from Reggie to Timothy.

"Hullo," said Timothy gaily, waving to her from the window ledge.

"Hullo," said she tonelessly, glancing behind her as the cracker bag fell and broke in a small cascade on the floor at her feet.

Reggie, draped in the scant folds of the red calico cover which turned the cot into a sofa during the day, with his high hat on the side of his head, giving an impromptu imitation of *Chanticleer*, paused nervously. Annie seemed to his dazed senses to be overburdened and yet they had not been introduced and, unrequested, he hesitated to offer his services to a strange lady. So he crouched on the edge of the bed and gazed distressfully at her as the bag fell and broke.

"Hullo," said Patrick, hurrying down the hall with the rest of the things for supper. "What are you doing, Annie, dropping the crackers all over the floor? Here, put those bundles on the table. Don't stand there, just chewing."

"She isn't batty," he explained as Annie, chewing methodically, did as she was told and went out. "She's a bit stupid, that's all, and has never had a show." He looked at the drunken Reggie and for a moment his eyes flashed with something more than disgust, the smoldering rage of the poor for the injustice of the world's financial division, where one has so much and another so little, and neither is to be praised or blamed for his affluence or his poverty. "A darned sight more depends on getting a show than you think. We aren't any different down here from you others with your millions.

We are all just people. You've had a show and we haven't."

"Certainly," said Timothy.

"Most certainly," agreed Reggie.

But the sight of the gaunt Annie had recalled a rapidly fading idea to Reggie's beclouded mind.

"Mush go," said he, looking wildly around for his hat, his stick and his gloves. "Mush go, bah jove. Where's my hat?"

"See here," said Patrick, finding the missing articles for his guest and removing his own properties from Reggie's shoulders. "See here, I'll put you in a taxi and send you home. Tim stays here."

"Certainly nosh," declared Reggie angrily.
"My fasher comes with me."

"Certainly," said Timothy.

"Mosh certainly," agreed Reggie.

Patrick laughed helplessly and watched them totter out and down the hall.

Night had fallen, cold and rainy, with a biting wind from the river which seemed to carry snow in its stinging breath. The rush hour was nearly over and the crowd was thinning out to that sparse number seen just before the gaieties of the evening begin and just after the vast swarm from work dash by for subways and L stations. Reggie soon hailed

a passing taxicab. The only policeman on the block strolled up and watched the two good-naturedly as Timothy climbed into the cab, lost his hat by contact with the top of the door, but thankful that it wasn't his head, and too cold to bother about a lost hat, sank down in the dusty interior. Reggie scrambled in after him and the driver slammed the door.

"Where to?" he asked.

Reggie with visible pride, remembered. "The *Helen*," said he. "Wharf 5."

"He's Boggs," said the policeman as the driver glanced at him for advice. "He has a yacht by that name. Take him there. If it's not right, the watchman will tell you what to do with him."

They stopped at many saloons on the way down, and by the time they drew up at wharf 5, Timothy was blissfully comatose and Reggie was sinking slowly after him into the same condition.

A limousine drew up at the same time as the taxicab, and two young men, followed by a depressed man servant, over-burdened with bags and suitcases, alighted.

"That the *Helen*?" asked the driver of the taxicab, nodding toward a vessel lying beside the wharf with gangplank down and windows brightly lighted.

"That's the *Helen*," replied the shorter of the two young men. "Whom have we here?" And he peered curiously into the dark depths of the cab. "Gad, Willie, it's Reggie," he chuckled. "Reggie *in compos mentis*."

Willie Collins was as tall as his companion was short and as thin as the other was wide. He glanced languidly over Monty's head and grunted. Willie Collins never laughed. Which fact he had been wont to mention with some pride if it failed to be commented on without his drawing one's attention to it, until Molly O'Brien had once murmured in her soft drawl that missed being a brogue by her father's millions, "Neither does a four-legged pup."

"Gad," said he slowly, gazing down on the recumbent Reggie, "so it is."

A short thin man hurried down the gangplank and approached them eagerly. His small, smooth-shaved face was drawn with anxiety and his long white hands rubbed themselves nervously. His hair was a pale yellow, smooth and shiny like the sides of an inverted bowl of brass, his small, closely-shut mouth seemed to have practically no lips and his mild, rather prominent gray eyes had a perpetual expression as of apology for his unfortunate existence.

"Mr. Collins, good evening," said he with a short bow. "Mr. Browne, good evening."

"Ah, Dobbins," said Montague Browne, his eyes gleaming with relish for the occasion. "Looking for Mr. Boggs, I dare swear."

"Yes, sir," said Dobbins, turning from one to the other and rubbing his long hands together in his agitation, but without a glance for the shabby cab and its bibulous occupants. "The Maynards have come, sir, and Mr. Boggs has not yet turned up, though he was very anxious to be here to receive them. He had a few errands to do but he said he would surely be here by five at the latest. The Maynards —"

Reggie, to Dobbins' grieved surprise, himself broke in on the conversation. He thrust out his head and glanced around the dock with drunken solemnity, his eyes lingering long on the stolid, overburdened serving man, a bag under each arm, a suit-case sagging heavily from each hand, his stupid mouth open, his vacant eyes fixed on space.

"Shay, there's Annie," he cried, waving his hand gaily. "Hullo, Annie."

The over-burdened man servant looked distressed. Monty laughed, and Dobbins uttered a mild, "Come, come, sir."

Reggie turned to his sleeping companion and

dragged Timothy to the door, backing out before him.

"My fasher," said he, allowing the old man to sink on the cab step and continue his slumbers against the side of the door. "Gen'men, let me in'duce my fasher."

Timothy, old and shabby and drunk, with his unshaved face and gray hair straggling over the frayed collar of his aged coat, slept peacefully on. Monty and Willie viewed him a moment in startled surprise, noticing the dilapidated shoes, cracked here, patched there, and well-nigh soleless; the shabby trousers, turned up so often to hide the raveling that they hardly came to the shoe-tops and were again raveled, and the old, bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, darned and grease-spattered, securely pinned high about the throat to prevent the lack of collar and shirt from being seen. Dobbins' jaw fell and his prominent little eyes regarded Timothy with the supercilious scorn of the fastidious man servant.

The taxicab and the limousine had drawn up in the bright glare of one of the wharf's arc lights. Conspicuous on the empty dock, Reggie was going on with the introductions, struggling to stand upright, and making weak ineffectual gestures with his long thin hands.

"My fasher, Misher Monty Browne — Glad to know you, sir — Misher Collins, le' me presen' my fasher —"

Willie removed his hat and bowed gravely.
"Howdy-do."

Monty shook hands politely and murmured that he was honored. His eyes met Willie's. Willie's right closed slowly, portentously, and Monty chuckled.

"Get them both in below," whispered Willie.

"Put 'father' in my room," whispered Monty.

Again their eyes met. Willie grunted. Monty chuckled.

"Sir," said Dobbins anxiously. "We will attract attention here. We must send the old man away and get Mr. Boggs on board."

"He ish my only true frien'," announced Reggie suddenly, arousing himself for a moment from the stupor that was creeping over him.

"We must get him away, sir," pleaded Dobbins, with an anxious glance over his shoulder at the lighted windows of the yacht. "They will see us, and the Maynards have come, and we said dinner was to be at eight —"

"Now, don't you fret, Dobbins," soothed Monty. "Mr. Collins and I will see to this." He turned briskly to the over-burdened serving man. "Pay

the driver and send the cab away, Billings," he ordered. "Then get that luggage you have on board quietly, by the lower deck, and come back. Mind you do it quietly. Don't let any one see you. Here," turning to Dobbins, who was struggling to raise Reggie to his feet, "you go on board with Boggs. Keep to the shadows and we shall help you get him on without being seen. I shall explain to the Maynards that he is seasick and has gone to bed, that he always gets seasick the first thing, been that way since a child."

"Thank you, sir, but what are you sending the cab away for?" asked Dobbins, struggling not only to support Reggie but to control his own vague suspicions of these two of his master's guests and address them with all the deference due from a servant to his superiors. "We must send the old man away—"

"That's all right, Dobbins. You simply trust us," reassured Willie, helping Monty drag Timothy to his feet.

Dobbins glanced sharply from Monty's round fat face, smooth and pink like a baby's or a ripe apple, with its full thick lips and small closely-set eyes, to Willie's long lean visage, sallow and thin. Both looked back, mildly, innocently, and Dobbins' suspicions tottered as weakly as Dobbins' master.

"We must get the old man away," he repeated, staggering beneath the too heavy load of Reggie and his responsibilities. "Mr. Boggs doesn't know him. He never saw him before, picked him up somewhere when he was drunk and didn't know no better. He wouldn't want him around —"

"Certainly not," interrupted Willie. "Monty, I will help Dobbins get Reggie on board without any one seeing him in this condition. You wait here for Billings and he will help you — er — get rid of our paternal impediment."

"All right," said Monty cheerfully. "That will be best."

And Dobbins' last half-formed suspicion of he did not know quite what fled, and he gave up his first intention of remaining to see whether Monty came on board simply in company with Billings or also with the paternal impediment.

CHAPTER IV

A MAN'S A MAN

TIMOTHY after he had awakened lay a while with his eyes closed. His head ached and he was tired, thoroughly tired. Every morning of his life he woke up a bit more tired than he had been the morning before, a bit more unequal to the struggle of keeping body and soul and worn-out clothes together. Days had become simply a test of endurance. The future held nothing, and the past held only ghosts that were best forgotten.

He lay and wondered listlessly where he was, too indifferent to open his eyes for a moment and find out. He remembered yesterday having had a glass of beer with an acquaintance for whom he had done a trifling service and that on his empty stomach, the one glass had made him fairly drunk. He remembered that he had sought the seclusion of Central Park to avoid as much as possible any encounter with the police and that he had met a stranger there. After that things became blank, blurred at first, and finally obliterated, except the fact, vouched for by his aching head, that he had become hopelessly

drunk. He turned his head restlessly and the pillow under it sank softly as though it were of a goodly thickness of downy feathers, such a pillow as one did not find in the police station, nor even on Patrick's scant rickety cot. The mattress, he realized now that he thought about it, was correspondingly soft, and the blankets covered him with a snug and sufficient warmth and felt smooth and silky against the face. He could not be at Mills Hotel for he had not had the requisite cash to be able to sleep there as he occasionally did; besides, the beds more resembled a plank or waffle-irons than beds. Maybe he was in the hospital again. He listened, but heard no busy footsteps passing and repassing, nor the soft swish of women's skirts. He heard instead a peculiar splashing sound, like the wash of water against the piers down among the wharfs where he had sometimes found a job at sweeping or window cleaning. And as he listened, he realized that his bed was rising and falling gently.

"Guess I've got 'em still," he thought wearily. "I seem to be on a boat, but that's impossible. I'm too old to be shanghaied and the bed's too soft for the hole of a ship."

A breeze through an opening somewhere stole

across his face and he smelt the salt of the sea. Wearily, he opened his eyes and glanced around.

Everywhere was polished woodwork and shining brass. Directly opposite was a wide low couch, silk-upholstered, and a dressing-table built against the wall and laden with silver-mounted cut-glass toilet articles, and here and there, still within his line of vision, were wicker lounging chairs gay with cushions. On a small table by his bed were books and magazines, a silver smoking-set and an electric lamp. Through the open port-hole, he caught a glimpse of dull gray water and a leaden sky.

But what caught and held Timothy's attention was a man lying back in one of the chairs and regarding him with an expression of bored sorrow. His face was long and thin and cadaverous, with side whiskers and a pale high forehead, mounting ever upward to a smooth-shaved crown edged on each side with red hair. He was dressed very neatly and plainly, irreproachably, it seemed to Timothy, thinking of his own wardrobe.

Feeling Timothy's eyes on him, the man turned from a languid glance at the bit of sky to be seen through the port-hole, and stifling a yawn behind a long knobby hand, rose wearily.

"Beg pardon," said he with a deference that merely emphasized his scorn, "my master said as 'ow I was to 'elp you dress."

Timothy saw his own shabby coat and still more shabby trousers hanging from a clothes-rack near the dresser with his footless stockings and worthless shoes on the floor beneath. He saw no under-clothes for he had none. He looked into the thin supercilious face above him and slowly closed his eyes.

"Come back in an hour," said he coldly. "I never rise so early as this." He drew up the bed-clothes and turned his face to the wall.

The man flushed angrily, threw back his head a bit more and thrust forth the space where there should have been a chin.

"Beg pardon, but hit's heleven."

"Come at twelve," said Timothy austerey, drawing the blankets closer and shutting his eyes in gentle slumber.

Billings stared haughtily, his long thin face growing as red as his scant hair. He had expected to have some fun with the bloke and it irritated him to be dismissed. The painful humiliation of being ordered from the room by a beggar cut deep into his sensitive soul. He stared a moment at Timothy's back and tumbled gray hair, opened his

mouth to speak, thought better of it and stalked majestically away.

Timothy waited until he heard the door shut, then he sat up and threw off the covers. He was clothed in a suit of red pajamas, made of the finest silk and many sizes too large for him. Where was he, and to whom did he owe the pajamas, the cozy bed and the insolent man servant?

The door opened suddenly and Billings' long red face and high glistening forehead appeared. Seeing the old 'un sitting up, caught in the trap, he grinned with vindictive pleasure.

"Beg pardon—"

"Granted," said Timothy coldly. "Next time, knock, then you won't have to beg pardon. Did you forget something?"

"My master said has 'ow I was to 'elp you—"

Timothy looked at the smug red face, into the small eyes with their boundless contempt for one who had no money, and wondered what kind of cad his master was that he should subject a stranger to the humiliating presence of this insolent fool. He reached for the cigarette case slowly, with great care selected a cigarette, lighted it and blowing a little cloud of smoke into the air, removed the cigarette from his mouth and turned languidly to the waiting Billings.

"I believe I said in an hour," said he, his eyes resting coolly on the man's red face.

Billings flushed still redder. "I thought—"

"Ah," said Timothy. "Is it possible!" He selected a magazine, opened it and glanced casually at Billings. "An hour, please," said he, and turned to knock the ashes carefully from the end of his cigarette.

"I thought—" repeated Billings.

Timothy did not raise his eyes from the magazine. "Pray don't think," said he. "Leave the room."

And Billings left.

Sure that the man would not return, Timothy, in the long red pajamas, nevertheless staggered to the door and locked it, then he turned wearily and viewed his surroundings. The adventure did not appeal to him or serve to raise the gloom that enshrouded his spirits. Where was he? On some rich man's yacht he assumed from the daintiness of the room and the tossing of the vessel. An ocean liner would ride more steadily and a small ship, the size of the one he judged himself to be on, unless it were a private yacht, would not have silk upholstered couches nor silver-topped toilet articles of cut-glass.

He looked at his two garments, hanging so

ridiculously incongruous, by the smart dressing-table, and rage, mingled with shame and loathing, mounted slowly in a hot flush to his lean old face. He threw back his head and gazed at his suddenly whitened face, reflected in the pier glass opposite.

"I have no clothes," said Timothy aloud, "but by God, I'm a man."

He hitched up the pajamas and crossed to the bathroom, where he washed, shaved and cut his straggling gray hair as well as he could. Then, he turned to his clothes with the depression they always engendered. His shoes had been nicely blacked and once again dull rage surged through Timothy, up his thin face to his soft gray hair. It had been no kindness, that blackening of his worthless miserable shoes. Their shapelessness had simply been emphasized by the broad expanse of shining black, each hole more distinctly revealed, each patch more clearly outlined. He wore a pair of woman's stockings so that when the feet were gone for good, he could pull the leg down over his foot and yet have length enough to cover the gap between his shoe-tops and trousers-ends. He adjusted the stockings now, sitting on the edge of the great soft bed, among the silken blankets, and cursed his unseen host, as he struggled to cover his bare feet that they might not show through the holes

in his shoes. He drew on his trousers and noticing the raveling around the bottom of the legs, took the manicure scissors and clipped them off as closely as he dared.

"I'm a man, but by God," said Timothy whimsically, "I would feel a darned sight more like one if I had some decent clothes."

He drew on the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat and fastened it around his throat with infinite care, succeeding after many trials in pinning it in such a way that the pin was inside, hidden by the collar, only a fraction of inch of steel revealing its presence. He looked around for his hat and not finding it, decided that it was merely another example of the humor of his host. He looked at his long reflection dressed and shaved, in the pier glass, and self-disgust took the place of his anger and perplexity.

"A failure," he thought bitterly, "a miserable hopeless failure. That thing with the red face is at least no failure in his line — a servant. But I? A living personification of incompetence."

On towels, pillow-cases and toilet articles, Timothy had noticed a monogram, but so intricately woven were the letters, he had not been able to make them out. On the wall over his bed, as he turned to go out, he saw the picture of a large

yacht heading proudly out to sea, smoke belching forth from the great funnels, pennants gaily flying, and underneath, he read: "The *Helen* — Owner, Reginald Van de Water Boggs."

"My host," thought Timothy. "Young Boggs!"

He chuckled and his gray eyes twinkled, amusement for the moment uppermost. His old head came up and his shoulders straightened themselves in the shabby coat. A sneering smile curved his cynical old lips and he bowed to himself with the courtly grace of a generation ago. He did not know the young man; had never, to his knowledge, seen him, but he had read about him at least once a month for the last ten years in the daily press of the country, and he rather fancied meeting him, for according to newspaper accounts, young Boggs, like himself, was always stepping from one unfortunate experience into another. Timothy chuckled as he thought of the story he would tell Mrs. Russell and the colorless Annie when he returned, and the old woman would ask him in to have a cup of tea as she sometimes did in the gray dusk of a dreary day.

Then he glanced down at his shabby shoes scuffing over the thick rugs and his amusement passed, while once more grim self-disgust enveloped him.

and he felt mentally too sore to enjoy the unforeseen adventure. He was too old. He had wanted too much for so long to have any mental capacity left to be able to rise above his clothes and enjoy the situation. With a weary sigh, he opened the door to the deck and stepped forth.

The sky was overcast and the ocean reflected its leaden hues. There was a high sea running and the vessel pitched and rolled in the heavy swells. Before and behind, as far as one could see, stretched the gray mass of tumbling water. There was nothing in sight, land or boat or wheeling sea-gull, just the gray sky and the grayer ocean and between them the tossing ship. The long deck was empty and Timothy leaned a moment in the protection of the wall, shivering in the chill wind that blew steadily.

As he stood there a door farther down the deck opened and a small man stepped out, hanging to a derby hat and trying to hold shut his coat. He stood a moment gazing out to sea, his lipless mouth firmly closed, his small nose red in the biting wind. Then he turned to go in and his eye fell on Timothy. For a second he stared in painful surprise, then an expression of pleasure, at finding his suspicions justified, crossed his sallow dreary face but was immediately followed by one of consternation and .

dismay. He hurried forward, holding to his hat and tipping from side to side with every lunge of the ship.

"Here," said he sharply. "You want to go below, my man. I will take you to the kitchen where you can keep warm until we reach some port where we can put you ashore and give you money to return home with."

The blood tingled in Timothy's hollow cheeks. He drew himself up angrily, pitifully conscious of the trousers that barely reached his shoe-tops, of the coat, fastened with two clasp-pins and a button. To turn and go in was childish, to stay and fight with a servant, humiliating, and not to do either, impossible.

"You can't stay here," protested Dobbins, as Timothy hesitated.

"Certainly not," agreed the old man gently. "It's a bit too cold."

He opened the door behind him and went in, closing it softly in Dobbins' angry face.

"The condescension of those beneath you is the most damnable thing about poverty," thought Timothy, and sinking into the nearest chair, he put his face into his trembling old hands and stared in smoldering rage at the soft blue rugs on the polished floor, while over and over, rising and falling

with the ship, like the refrain to his rhyme of life went the one word of sick disgust, "Incompetent, incompetent."

There was a knock on the door into the hall which Timothy had unfortunately unlocked as he left the room. The door immediately opened without the formality of waiting for permission, and again Billings' lean visage with its high shiny forehead appeared.

"Hit's twelve," said he.

Timothy leaned quickly back among the soft silk cushions of his chair and opened a magazine. "Twelve?" he questioned indifferently, not raising his eyes from the leaves he was turning in his search for a good story.

"You said at twelve, I was to 'elp you dress," explained Billings, irritated almost beyond endurance.

Timothy found a story to his liking, bent back the cover of the magazine that he might hold it the more comfortably and settled himself among the cushions.

"You said—" began Billings in a loud voice, shrill with outraged dignity.

Timothy glanced up. "Are you deaf, my man?"

"No, sir, I ain't," snapped Billings.

"Deaf people, I have noticed, generally shout at every one," said Timothy kindly. "Be so good as to lower your voice after this."

"My master said as 'ow I was to 'elp you dress —"

"I am dressed as you see," returned Timothy.
"Bring me my rolls and coffee."

"They don't 'ave rolls and coffee —"

"Ah! A whisky and soda, then, and some crackers."

"Hevery one 'as to go to breakfast," declared Billings. "Miss Maynard don't like hit —"

"Very well," said Timothy. "I will ring when I want you."

He turned to his story and read with apparent absorption and complete unconsciousness of Billings' outraged presence.

"The hold bloke," thought Billings. "Looks like a rag-picker and acts like a bloomin' millionaire."

He hesitated a moment and then with ostentatious unconcern, stalked slowly to the door and went out.

Alone once more, Timothy lay back with his hands behind his head and pondered the situation. His presence was not needed in New York even in the humble capacity of café dish-washer. He

had been discharged from such a position the week before as being too old and slow and had been unable to find another. No one would miss him or be expecting him, save perhaps Patrick, and maybe, Madame Russell. He might as well be in Zululand for all the financial embarrassment his absence from the city would cause him.

"Incompetent," he thought bitterly. "The one and only sin of the present day — incompetency."

He was sure that if he remained in the room where he was, his host would seek him or send for him sooner or later. He glanced at the tumbled crimson of the silk pajamas among the blankets on the still unmade bed and was confident that young Boggs had an interest in him, probably simply as a joke with which to pass a few monotonous hours. So he decided to stay where he was and await developments. He was hungry, but he had been hungry before and hunger was not incentive enough to make him leave the seclusion of the stateroom. Billings had mentioned a Miss Maynard, and Timothy shrank from the ordeal of seeing surprise, scorn, pity, slowly dawn and grow in the eyes of a pretty woman.

The door opened once more unceremoniously, and Willie Collins entered, followed by Monty Browne. Willie's face was grave and a trifle

gloomy. His thin mouth drooped after the manner of Madame Russell's, and his small gray eyes were entirely lacking in any expression whatsoever. Monty's round fat face was likewise serious, though red with suppressed excitement and amusement over "the joke on Reggie," and his brown eyes twinkled despite himself. In the souls of both was the pleasant anticipation of immediate amusement that had filled their man servant earlier in the morning.

They glanced at Timothy lying back in the chair and fat Monty barely suppressed a chuckle as he thought of Reggie's face when presented to "father." Willie immediately looked away to hide a similar enjoyment in his eyes. Of Timothy and his feelings as a man, neither had a thought. He was "a jolly beggar from the East Side," and had no feelings except those of hunger and cold and thirst. They would feed him well and give him some money and he would enjoy the occasion as much as they did when he realized what they were up to and that he was among the elect. It was a joke, too, worthy of any sacrifice,—Reggie, trying to pose as reformed before the girl he wanted to marry, suddenly confronted with the companion of his midnight revels.

Willie held out his hand. "You mustn't mind

our breaking in on you like this," said he, with the cordiality due to Reggie's father. It was better to keep the old man in the dark as to their purpose until he was brought before Reggie. His acting would be all the more funny if he were suddenly confronted by Reggie and the situation. "This used to be my room and I forgot to knock."

Timothy looked back into Willie's long pale face and thought of Spigleheimer, who kept the restaurant in the basement of 178 Second Avenue. Spigleheimer was long and sallow and grave, with small eyes and a smooth forehead, high and white.

"A tombstone to buried brains," thought Timothy, not offering to take the extended hand. "Ah, yes," said he aloud, glancing beyond Willie at Monty, with a slow, cold, impersonal stare that made Monty nervous and deepened the flush on his round fat face.

"Suppose he is a gentleman, bah jove," thought the fat youth, suddenly fearful of consequences.

Last night the old man, drunk and dirty, whom he, with the assistance of Billings, had carried down the wharf and smuggled up to Willie's room as being nearer than his own, had had a two weeks' growth of hair on cheeks and chin, but now he was shaved, and the narrow mouth, the delicate oval face and the finely cut nose and forehead were

those of one who could pride himself on being gently born, and it was only in the last generation that the Monty Brownes could do the same. Monty, in the presence of what he to himself called "the blood royal," always felt a sneaking humility of which he was angrily ashamed. He had never done anything to realize his worth as a man, no matter what his father's birth may have been, and had all of a low class Englishman's reverence for the gentry born in his blood by generations of servility. The fact that he was looked upon as being in America's upper class could not erase it. Willie was never abashed. He came from a good family that had gone to seed, though Willie was supremely unconscious of the fact, because of too much money, which had occasioned marriages and intermarriages with people as purposeless as itself and had culminated in Willie, who had empty visions of the latest thing in cotillion favors where his great grandparent had had brains.

"We have come to explain about breakfast," said Monty, seeking to allay his nervousness which seemed on the increase beneath the old man's steady eyes.

"Is this your room, also?" asked Timothy. "Are we three men in a room, not to mention the dog?" and he nodded toward the half opened door

through which Billings' elongated visage was dimly outlined.

It immediately disappeared while Monty broke into great guffaws of relieved mirth and Willie, with a grunt, hastily closed the door.

"He told us that you had been asking for coffee and rolls," said Willie, "so we have come to explain. You see Miss Maynard does not approve of any one who is not sick having breakfast in bed."

"Fancy," moaned Monty, "insisting that we all get up and come to breakfast at nine o'clock."

"Nine o'clock," repeated Willie slowly.
"Fancy!"

"She says that it is lazy to lie in bed when decent people are up and working," went on Monty.

"I should think," said Timothy, "that you could have explained without much difficulty that you were not decent people."

"You would think so," agreed Monty.

"I tried to make her see how foolish it is for working people to get up early and make the day any longer than it need be," said Willie. "But why reason with a woman?"

"You give it up," said Timothy, "as you grow older, just as you give up thinking that the moon is

made of green cheese or that you yourself are beautiful."

"So," said Monty, and sighed again, "we all get up at half past eight and get down to breakfast at ten."

CHAPTER V

TWO PICTURES

“WE had the clocks put back an hour,” explained Willie. “With a little money, nearly anything is possible.”

“That’s so,” agreed Timothy. “With a little money you can make a man out of a bundle of rags.”

“Or a picture,” said Willie, with a dreamy look in his eyes, “out of a chorus girl.”

“If your father is willing,” sighed Monty, who had reached his majority but not his independence. Independence at the cost of work was more painful to Monty than an ulcerated tooth on a hunting expedition, forty miles from relief.

“Miss Maynard,” questioned Timothy, “owns the yacht?”

“No, she owns Reggie,” replied Willie.

Timothy glanced from one to the other. “His mistress?” he asked diffidently. The fires and passions of youth were dead, and a mistress was to Timothy no less than a breach of faith to one’s self and to one’s community.

Monty lay back in the nearest chair and laughed until he cried. Willie stroked his long chin and dared not even grunt lest he chuckle instead.

"No, no," said he. "That is the unfortunate part of the whole affair. Miss Maynard is president of the W. C. T. U."

"And vice-president of the Working Girls' Guild," moaned Monty.

"And treasurer of the Y. W. C. A., I believe," added Willie.

"And secretary of the New York Suffragists," sighed Monty.

"She has a Sunday-school class on the East Side."

"And is district visitor to Avenue A," contributed Monty.

"She has written a paper on *White Slavery in America*," said Willie.

"I should think she would have to get up at five and breakfast at six," said Timothy.

"Why," asked Monty, "does she go to bed, at all?"

"Hygiene," explained Willie. "She teaches a class of immigrant mothers three times a week, and so feels called upon to practise what she speaks, I suppose."

"Do the women go?" asked Timothy.

"Yes," said Willie. "She feeds them after-

ward, so they don't have to go to the expense of getting supper, you see."

"What is she doing on this yacht?" asked Timothy. "I should think the W. C. T. U. and the rest of the alphabet would need her."

"It's a duty we all owe to humanity, she says, to take three months' vacation every year," explained Monty.

"Suppose you can't," suggested Timothy.

"When you must, there is no such word as can't," declared Willie, lifting his eyes to the ceiling and waving his hand in gentle imitation of the lady.

"Man made work, God made rest," added Monty, quoting in his turn.

"And the devil made poverty," said Timothy.

"Not at all, not at all," contradicted Willie, still in the tones of the lady under discussion. "God made poverty to cleanse our souls. The devil made luxury to buy them from us."

"I should judge from that that the lady is rich," surmised Timothy.

"She holds fifty millions in trust for the Lord," said Monty reverently.

"Let us pray," and Willie inclined his head.

"Reggie loves her," said Monty tearfully. "Bah jove, it's pitiful."

"She won't marry him, I suppose," questioned Timothy.

"She does not love him enough," replied Willie.

"He got up this very trip especially for her," said Monty, and chuckled as he thought of Reggie's condition the night before.

"Why did she consent to go with such another—uncongenial set as I should imagine it to be?" asked Timothy diffidently.

"She is reforming Reggie," explained Monty in an awed undertone.

"When she has made a man out of him in place of a decanter, she may marry him," added Willie.

"Imagine," sighed Monty, "preferring a man to a decanter."

"Rotten poor taste," said Willie.

"Provided the decanter is full," agreed Timothy.

"So, you can understand why Billings couldn't bring your coffee to your room," said Willie. "You must be terribly hungry."

Timothy was. The day before he had eaten hardly more than enough for breakfast, and he and Reggie had left Patrick's hospitable board without so much as a bite. And that day he had had nothing. He glanced from one good-natured young

face to the other and his hostility and humiliation disappeared as the mist before the radiant glory of the sun, and all his usual childish simplicity and faith enveloped him in the warm glow of that eternal brotherhood of man that had brought him where he was.

"Yes," he admitted. "I am hungry." He decided that he would ask no questions of any one as to his whereabouts, and how he came to be on the yacht, except of his host himself, lest in some way he be subject to more humiliation than even the serving men could inflict. He felt sure that Reggie alone was to blame for the situation.

"Come to lunch," suggested Willie.

"Could I have it in here?" asked Timothy.
"You see if Mr. Boggs comes —"

"That's all right," said Monty hastily. "He won't come. He is busy explaining to Miss Maynard how he managed to get here just before the yacht sailed —"

"And that his present headache," added Willie, "is in no way a result of the unfortunate circumstances that prevented his being on board to receive his guests, and why he was unable to take dinner with them."

"Oh, yes," chorused Monty reassuringly, "he is busy."

"I do not want to meet a lot of people," objected Timothy. "I prefer to remain here."

"Now, you can't do that," protested Willie. "You are too hungry not to get something to eat. We will take you to the small breakfast room where you won't meet a soul, and we three will have lunch there by ourselves."

"Yes, indeed," joined in Monty. "Every one else will be eating in the dining-room. Miss Maynard has lunch at one, and bah jove, you're ready for it."

Timothy's hunger was steadily growing. His head ached and he felt faint for the want of food. The offer was tempting, too tempting. He rose, glancing sharply from one young face to the other. The two looked back with the innocent candor of children on the way to Sunday-school, and like Dobbins, his vaguely-formed suspicions fled.

Reggie sat at the head of the long table and slowly sipped the water which was the only beverage he was sure Helen Maynard did not object to. He looked thin and white and tired. His eyes were heavy and his sullen mouth drooped wearily. His square jaw, which was the only feature that redeemed his face from weakness, was thrust forward stubbornly, aggressively.

All of the seats were occupied but three,—Mrs. Maynard's, who always became sick at once and stayed sick until the ship was almost ready for docking, and Willie's and Monty's. Reggie glanced at the girl beside him and laughed softly.

"Poor old Willie and Monty," said he, "sick, I suppose."

"I saw them just before lunch," said Helen. "Tell me, Reggie, what is this I hear about your father?"

"Nothing, I hope," said Reggie. "Father died some five years ago. I would hate to think he wasn't quiet by this time."

"Somebody said—I think it was Monty—that you brought your father on board with you last night. I didn't get it straight because he wasn't talking to me and he dropped the subject when I joined the group he was talking to."

"Monty's idea of a joke, is like *Punch's*, dear," smiled Reggie. "Maybe you have been going to some spiritualist—"

"Certainly, I haven't. You know I'm not so silly as that, Reggie. No one can possibly hear from the other world."

"Can't possibly," agreed Reggie automatically, wondering where he had heard those words re-

cently. "Couldn't hear anything but coal rattling anyway, in father's case," he added listlessly.

"Don't talk like that, Reggie. It's not wit. Only cheap irreverence, and you know I hate it."

"I won't again, Helen. I am sorry." He glanced at her and his heavy eyes clouded.

She was slim and sweet and altogether desirable, yet so far above him in goodness that he wondered he didn't give up the useless struggle to win her for himself. He had been trying for the last ten years and was further away from his goal than ever. There were other girls, he told himself, prettier, gayer, brighter, younger, girls who would pet and condone where she scolded and condemned, girls who would laugh when she frowned, be comrades and helpmates to a man where she would be nothing more than an example impossible to live up to. And yet he loved her, had always loved her, since they were boy and girl together, going to the same childish parties, to the same dancing classes. The night when she became eighteen and had made her girlish fluttering bow to her mother's world, he had asked her to marry him and she had consented. But even then Reggie had been a bit too gay to be entirely desirable as a son-in-law and her father had made ~~her~~ ^{him} wait. She had gone to Vassar, for she had ^{always} been serious and a stu-

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dent, and Reggie had struggled a while at Yale. They had seen little of each other, and Helen, hearing of him only what was not pleasant to hear, had in her senior year, broken the engagement. Their paths had separated still further, but Reggie had always longed for her, and made vain ineffectual attempts to pull up and be worthy of her. He liked her principles, her strenuousness in uplifting mankind and her outspoken detestation of all that smacked of vulgarity, fastness or irreverence. The other girls seemed each a foolish copy of all the rest, their thoughts as light as their fluffy dresses, their lives as empty as their pretty heads. Helen's hair was dark and soft, escaping in wayward locks around her temples and tiny ears. It was a constant temptation for him not to put his hand on it and fondle the smooth silky curls. He had yielded once, timidly and a bit awkwardly lifting a stray lock that clustered around her ear with gentle trembling fingers.

"Please, Reggie," she had said, not even moving her head aside, and he had never dared do it again.

Her cheeks were round and cool, and faintly pink with perfect health. Her eyes were hazel, with long thick lashes, straightforward, earnest eyes, that had long forgotten the art of coyly glancing. They turned Reggie's heart upside down

every time he caught an unexpected glimpse of them. Her mouth had lost its girlish softness, and had become firm, determined, with the passing years. The expression on her face, the way she carried her head and the clear intonations of her voice bespoke a boundless faith in herself and her own opinions and decisions. She was completely absorbed in herself and her work, and when she thought of Reggie, it was with a pitying tenderness for the happy-go-lucky little boy of the dancing classes and childish parties.

"I wish I knew what they meant," said she slowly, stirring her chocolate and looking at him thoughtfully from under her level brows. "I am sure some one came on board with you last night, Reggie."

Reggie flushed with sudden misgiving at her persistency. He recalled vaguely that some one about noontime had said Dobbins was hunting anxiously for him and that he had since purposely avoided his often troublesome solicitous man servant. But all his guests had arrived before him as Dobbins had taken plaintive pains to make clear that morning as he was dressing for breakfast. It was absurd to think that any one had come on board with him. If any one had, where was he? Why had he not made himself known? The idea was absurd.

"I have told you again and again, dear, that no one did."

"But, weren't you drunk, Reggie?"

"No," snapped Reggie. "I beg pardon for being cross, Helen, but why do you always doubt me?"

"Why weren't you at dinner?"

"I was seasick, dear. Didn't Monty tell you?"

"Are you always sick the first night as he said?"

"Always. I have to get my sea-legs."

She looked straight at him with her earnest starry eyes, and Reggie looked steadily, gravely back.

"I am sorry I did not trust you, Reggie," said she, satisfied that he was telling her the truth. "I know that one ought to have faith, if one wants to help another to be better. People will be what one believes them to be."

"Faith begets goodness. Distrust never does," said Reggie soberly, accusing her gently by the tones of his voice, of injustice.

Helen nodded and her eyes were grieved that she should have made such a mistake. "I won't do it again, Reggie," said she, and leaned toward him in sweet alluring contrition, all womanly softness in her humiliation. Her lips were red and moist and so near his own that Reggie, forgetting

his deceit in their nearness, longed to bend and kiss them.

"Faith is akin to love," he whispered, with a sudden flash of the hope that never died springing up in his eyes at her sweet reasonableness.

A delicate flush crept into the round smooth cheeks, and she shook her head, but gently, kindly. "Don't, Reggie. You know I do not care enough for you."

"If I reform, dear," he pleaded, emboldened by her kindness.

"Will you?" she asked, leaning nearer to him, instead of away as she usually did. "Will you, ever, for my sake?"

"Helen," he cried softly, his pulses bounding, "is that faith to doubt me?"

"I am sorry," she protested. "I do have faith in you, perfect faith — but — but you do drink still—"

"Last night —"

"Reggie, I do believe you when you say that last night you were simply seasick —"

The door opened, and on the threshold stood Willie and Monty and between them, Timothy.

All conversation stopped promptly and as though the interruption had been momentarily expected and eagerly awaited, for the two had dropped a

hint that they were to play a joke on Reggie at lunch. Only Helen and Reggie, glancing down the long room, and Timothy staring back, were startled. There was an amused silence as when an expectant audience waits for the opening lines of a comedy which they know will raise a laugh, and all gazed at the incongruous spectacle of Timothy, old and shabby and thin, standing between Willie and Monty, young, well-groomed, sartorial perfection.

In the background was the dark Flemish wood-work, with the massive sideboard and the gleaming silverware, with the cut-glass, the rare steins and rich old pewter mugs and platters. In the foreground was the long table, with its snowy cloth and masses of crimson roses, the polished floor and soft rugs, the well-dressed people, the surprised and gaping footman, and Reggie, immaculate in yachting costume. There, near the door stood Timothy, in his shabby, bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, his tight trousers not reaching to his shoe-tops, and his horrible shining parody on shoes, patched here, bursting there. The contrast was too much. A low titter, barely suppressed, rippled up the table, as the guests, not quite sure of the nature of the joke, failed to take in the situation other than its outward aspect. Willie began to speak and the half-started laugh died.

"Reggie, old chap," said he, "you shouldn't be so negligent. To-day you haven't been near this gentleman, and yet, last night, you introduced him to Monty and me as your father."

Reggie's father! The titter rose to a hysterical giggle and all glanced at Reggie.

He rose, trembling with anger. A pulse beat in his cheek and his heavy jaw was thrust forward aggressively. Timothy, head up and shoulders back, was white to the lips. Across the table, the silver, the roses, their eyes met and held, the old man's and the young one's. Reggie remembered yesterday in the park, and Timothy recalled the stranger whom he had forgotten. A gleam of unbidden unexpected friendship leaped to the eyes of the dissipated young man and those of the gin-besotted, shabby old man, a gleam of understanding and fellowship such as comes when souls akin meet and recognize each other, no matter where, no matter when, even though the meeting is the first one.

Helen, white, startled, hurt, was staring from Reggie to the old man, but Reggie did not look at her. He bowed to Timothy across the length of the table.

"I apologize to the gentleman for having introduced him to either Mr. Collins or Mr. Browne,"

said he coldly, and his words fell, clear and distinct, on the now tense quiet of the long room. "My unfortunate physical condition last night is my only excuse. I was drunk, sir."

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS A LADY

HE pushed back his chair, and napkin clenched in one hand, he went to Timothy and held out his other hand.

“I trust my apology is accepted.”

A pin dropped on the floor could have been heard in the strained quiet of the long room. Willie's sallow face had grown drawn and yellow, his hands were clenched and he sucked in his lips with the odd sound of an intaken breath. Monty's fat face was crimson, and his mouth opened and shut as though he was about to speak. The rest were frightened and abashed as the full significance of Monty's so-called joke became clear. Some stared at their plates, some had half risen.

Timothy and Reggie shook hands gravely, while Timothy bowed with his old-time grace and gay bonhomie.

“My dear sir, I understand. I myself was not entirely sober last night.”

“I am glad of that,” said Reggie, “or you might not have consented to be my guest.”

"An honor, sir," said Timothy, "that drunk or sober, I am proud to accept."

"Pardon me," interrupted Willie coldly. "Did you intend the remark you just made, Mr. Boggs?"

"It's a peculiar custom of mine," returned Reggie slowly, "to say what I mean."

Monty broke in, fat and red and angry, with as much dignity as a billy-goat. "Well, by George, Reggie! We were only fooling, and there you go off the handle like a house on fire. You yourself called him father —"

"Another insult," said Reggie. "I trust you will forgive me again, sir." And he bowed to Timothy.

"A father," said Timothy, with a courtly bow in return, "is a necessity, a friend a preference. I trust, sir, I am a friend."

"And my guest," said Reggie.

And once more, Timothy in the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, drawn high around his thin old throat and fastened with two clasp-pins and a button, bowed with the courtly grace of fifty years ago.

"It's your own fault, Reggie," insisted Monty, whose anger, like a good time, was soon over. "You brought him along with you last night. How did we know he was a friend of yours? I am sure, if we had known it, we would never have played the

joke on you. I am sure I beg both your pardons. Great guns!"

Reggie bowed coldly and linked his arm in Timothy's. "Oh, Collins, you and Monty share the same room after this, then — er —" he hesitated, glanced appealingly at Timothy for his name and perforce paused.

"Father," suggested Molly O'Brien, and there was another moment of audible silence.

"They are bound to have us relatives," laughed Reggie, glancing at the lean delicate face beside him. "Will you be my father? It's a thankless job, I warn you."

"So is God's," said Timothy.

Reggie laughed and threw his arm over the shabby old shoulder with the boyish friendliness he had not outgrown. "Come and have some lunch," said he, and led Timothy to the head of the table, where Helen still sat, eating grapes with dainty well-bred indifference.

Willie Collins bowed stiffly and stalked from the room, visibly impressed with himself, while Monty slipped into the seat beside Molly O'Brien with a grunt of mingled hunger and satisfaction.

"It must be terrible to be thin," said Miss O'Brien, glancing from Willie's disappearing back to Monty. "Thin people are always so dignified

and I should think it would interfere so with your meals."

"My motto," said Monty contentedly, "is 'Eat and forget.' "

"That is no good," objected Molly. "It does not do for all occasions."

"Why not?"

"If you were in love, you couldn't forget."

"That's why I never fall in love," explained Monty, and reached for the crackers.

Reggie glanced at Helen with a plea for pardon, at least mercy, in his eyes. But the girl would not look up. She was hurt in her woman's tenderness and her reformer's pride.

"Never let a reformer know that you haven't reformed," Willie Collins had once advised Reggie with feeling, "or she will be your enemy for life."

"Helen," said Reggie gaily, a slight flush on his white face, "let me present my — father."

Helen looked up and bowed politely. "I hope," said she to Timothy, without a glance for Reggie, "that you have no expectation of God's success."

"God's or the devil's," sneered Reggie. "It is hard to tell which is the more successful."

"Not always," said Timothy amiably, sinking into the chair Reggie drew up for him.

The lady on Timothy's left laughed and leaned

toward him. "Tell me," said she, "if it were a question of money, in which corporation would you put your money, God's or the devil's?"

"The devil's," said Timothy promptly. "His stock wouldn't be watered."

Helen rose quickly. "My head aches, Reggie. I shall go and lie down, if you will excuse me."

She bowed to Timothy, and Timothy rising, bowed gallantly in return, impressed vaguely with the feeling that he had offended the lady but too faint with hunger to care.

Reggie followed her to the door. "Won't you let me explain, Helen?" he pleaded. "This afternoon, sometime? Please, dear."

"What explanation can there be, Reggie?" she asked, glancing at him a moment with the accusing gentleness of one who had never needed to be forgiven.

Reggie took heart of grace and replied gaily. "Give me time, dear, and I can think up one. You know that is my specialty."

"You are so proficient in it, Reggie," said she, "why practise any more?"

"'Practise makes perfect,'" quoted Reggie, plunging on rashly.

"You are quite perfect," said she, and with a bit of a nod, turned and left him.

Monty chuckled and winked at Molly O'Brien. "Father will queer Reggie beyond all hope," said he with infantile enjoyment.

"He won't be the first father to do that," said Molly O'Brien, thinking of O'Brien *pere*, and the brogue a score of millions could not entirely obliterate.

"Poor old Reggie," mused Monty. "But bah jove, it was a good joke."

"On whom?" asked Molly O'Brien.

Monty flushed and changed the subject.

Timothy was a philosopher.

"Philosophy or the lunatic asylum are the only two refuges from poverty," he had said to Patrick as he lay on the hard couch one gloomy day between jobs.

"Or suicide," added Patrick, who occasionally contemplated hell with pleasure as compared to the life of a clientless, penniless lawyer.

So, now, Timothy turned to his lunch and for a moment forgot the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, fastened with two clasp-pins and a button. Reggie joined him and introduced the others at the long table. The meal was practically over, but the rest still lingered, filled with well-bred amusement and curiosity, not so obvious, perhaps, as Annie's, but

of the same quantity. Timothy glanced from one to the other, and thought of Annie, he did not know why,—Annie, long and thin and lank, heavy-eyed and sallow-faced, with the dreary outlook on life engendered by a residence at 178 Second Avenue. The majority of people, like flowers, simply grow unconsciously to fit their environment. Timothy turned to the lady on his left and spoke with the gentle deference with which he favored Annie and Madame Russell.

“Curiosity,” said he, “is the lever of the human race. Without it, we would all be savages still.”

Mrs. McBride was tall and thin and well-dressed, with the frankly uninteresting face of one who knew nothing whatever of life. Her mind and her health had been highly cultivated and she labored under the impression that they were her character. But her character, like Annie’s, had had no show, one oppressed with poverty, the other with wealth.

“Can’t we give it a better name?” she asked, amused. “Curiosity is so distressingly—”

“Human,” suggested Timothy, and the lady looked at him a bit sharply, doubtful for the second of his friendly intentions.

“Human?” she questioned. “We are all human.”

"And so—?" suggested Timothy.

Mrs. McBride turned abruptly to her plate, frankly flushed.

"Why call it a lever?" asked Popplebaum from across the table, shrewd, bright-eyed and justly proud of himself. When one's mother has taken in washing, and one's wife wears a simple morning frock that cost one hundred and fifty dollars, and the financial distance between the wash-tub and the morning frock has been covered by one's own struggles and fighting ability, one has cause to be proud. "Why not call it a toboggan-slide? We have lost so much of the simplicity those old boys had."

"Vanity," answered Timothy. "No one will admit that in producing himself the world has retrograded."

"Haven't you a rather poor opinion of us all?" asked Mrs. McBride coldly; "vain and curious?"

"No," returned Timothy gently. "Not at all. I admire both of those attributes. Curiosity is the lever and vanity the force that moves the race."

"Some of us must have such little vanity, then," said she, and glanced significantly at the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, unable to resist the human desire to get even.

"Such colossal vanity," corrected Timothy amiably, "that they make no effort to use it to turn

the lever, feeling that even the lever can raise them no higher."

"What of pride, then," asked Popplebaum. "Is it merely vanity?"

"Yes," said Timothy, "vanity with a gentleman's birth and education."

"What is a gentleman?" asked Mrs. McBride with acid sweetness, and another attempt to even the score.

"What we all think we are," said Timothy.

"What is a lady?" asked Popplebaum with a wink.

"Our mothers," answered Timothy.

Popplebaum flushed. He remembered the wash-tub and in his estimation to wash clothes for a living stamped one beyond all question as no lady. He had all of the masses' worship of money and their impersonal, matter-of-fact acceptance of life and their own circumstances. The eyes of their souls are as yet as undeveloped as the physical eyes of the lower forms of life. Popplebaum, much as he loved his mother, was convinced that she was no lady and he was equally certain that she herself would have been the last to have claimed that distinction had she remained in the old country. He glanced keenly at the thin old face across the table, with the delicate mouth and deep-set gentle eyes,

and decided that the mother of the shabby stranger had been in truth a lady as defined by the standards of the old country, and felt for the first time a vague surmise that doubtless driven by necessity one could wash clothes and yet remain a lady.

Elliot Taylor nodded assent. "He is right," said he to Molly O'Brien who sat beside him.

But Molly, like Popplebaum, flushed. "I wonder," said she, playing with the fruit on her plate.

Taylor glanced at her questioningly. Her profile was pretty, her cheeks were flushed with health and constant care of what she ate and how she exercised, her hair was soft and arranged with all the skill of a capable maid to enhance whatever charms the face afforded. But the most skilful massage could not reduce the size of the neck, which was a bit too thick, nor refine the skin, which was a bit too coarse, effectually to conceal what Miss O'Brien considered her unfortunate origin. Elliot Taylor, with all the indifference to his own forebears of one gently born, felt a sick disgust for a moment that the redeeming trait of pride and loyalty to one's parents should be so seldom found among the common people, especially those whose parents had made enough money for their children to totter upward to the dizzy heights of Society. "Why

not?" he asked. "If we have no faith and pride in our own people, in whom can we have it?"

"That's all right," said Monty, eating on with undiminished pleasure, "but I know for a fact that my father has none in me, much as he would like to. I know it for a fact."

"You are an exception, Monty," laughed Taylor. "I have always maintained that Monty Browne was an exceptional man."

"I'm glad you put the man on," said Monty. "I would hate to be only an exception."

Timothy was hungry, terribly, ghastly hungry. He wanted to lift the frail bouillon cup in both hands and drink its contents with one long soul-filling draft. The two tiny wafers on the plate beside the cup were like an insult. He wanted to reach boldly for the cracker dish as Monty did, and eat and eat and eat. But the shame of his empty purse, the distressing fact of his too obvious poverty, made him sip the bouillon slowly, indifferently, and leave a half of one tiny wafer untouched.

"So we are all vain and curious," said Mrs. McBride again as the footman removed his bouillon cup. "Don't you really think you are rather hard on us?"

"Curiosity is not a sin," said Timothy. "A frank interest in your neighbor's affairs will more

often keep that neighbor straight than fear of the wrath of an almighty God."

"Curiosity should then be encouraged," suggested Reggie.

"Yes," said Timothy, losing interest in the conversation. When a starving man is waiting eagerly for the approach of something to eat, he has small interest in conversations on abstract subjects. He glanced at the cracker dish, hastily, longingly, surreptitiously. But Reggie caught the look, and feeling his host's glance upon him, Timothy glanced up and their eyes met.

Quickly Timothy hid the longing look in his with a flash of apologetic denial, but Reggie had seen the wolf hunger and his face reddened with shame at his own stupidity that he had not guessed the state of affairs. He noticed for the first time the pallor on the sunken cheeks, the brightness in the faded eyes, and realized that his guest was literally starving, starving and for pride's sake, playing with his food like a surfeited man. He glanced at his other guests who were idling over their lunch and watching Timothy with admiration and amusement.

"Everybody's excused," said he gaily.

"Whether he wants to be or not?" asked Popplebaum.

"He always wants to be," returned Reggie.

Popplebaum rose with a laugh and pulled out Mrs. McBride's chair.

"I'm not through," protested Monty as the rest rose. "Great guns, I've just begun."

"Suppose you wait until dinner to finish," suggested Reggie.

"I never finish lunch at dinner," objected Monty.
"It would interfere with my dinner."

Graham Farnum pulled out Monty's chair and dragged him good-naturedly to his feet. "A little self-denial, Monty," said he, "would be no end good for your personal appearance."

"My personal appearance is my own," declared Monty.

"Yes, fortunately," agreed Graham, leading him to the door.

Reggie dismissed the footman, and alone, in the large room, he and Timothy looked frankly, straight into each other's eyes.

"I'm a blasted ass," cried Reggie, throwing out his hand across the table. "But I didn't understand."

"It's past understanding — poverty," said Timothy grimly, taking the offered hand.

Reggie rose, and clearing a place among the dishes in front of Timothy, he pushed forward the

crackers, the olives and the fruit. He went to the sideboard and helped his guest liberally from every steaming dish. He went to the galley and returned with a plate piled high with bread and another with butter. He brought in cake and jelly and cheese, and ordering the astonished cook to make some coffee in place of the hot chocolate Miss Maynard favored at that time of day, waited until the coffee was done and carried it himself to Timothy.

“Now eat,” said he, “and damn your pride.”

CHAPTER VII

SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

TIMOTHY ate and drank, thankful and withal ashamed.

"I was so busy yesterday, I forgot to get any lunch," he explained with gentle unconcern, laying his napkin on the table beside his empty plate. "My business always picks up in the fall and keeps me rushing until after Christmas."

Reggie nodded and pushed forward the cigarettes. "I am afraid I don't know much about business," said he. "I am one of those useless animals born with a bank-account and no brains," he added moodily, thinking of some of Helen's favorite remarks anent the idle rich.

"Better be born with a bank-account than brains," said Timothy lightly, smoking with quiet pleasure in the afterglow of the good meal. "I was born with a small amount of each and have lost both."

"Too much of either bowls a man over," declared Reggie gloomily, gazing sullenly before him, his cigarette hanging from his listless fingers.

" You miss happiness. With too much money, you try to buy it, and it's not for sale. With too much brains, you know there is no such thing."

" If one could give up thinking, one might be happy," agreed Timothy.

" But then you wouldn't know it, if you were," objected Reggie. " So there is no such thing."

" Yes, there is," contradicted Timothy. " There is death and that thought always brings happiness. We don't have to live forever."

" That's true, too," agreed Reggie. " Would you mind telling me just what your business is?" he asked after a moment of silence.

" Employment agencies," replied Timothy promptly.

" Oh," said Reggie vaguely. " Finding work for poor devils, I suppose."

Timothy nodded. " It's a good business. Times are never slack. There are always so many poor devils who need work, and such a damn few who find it."

" You have a string of offices, I suppose," said Reggie.

" I feel as if I belonged to them instead of they to me," said Timothy modestly.

Reggie feared that his guest must be anxious to return to the city, yet hesitated to voice his fear

while still uncertain how and under what condition the stranger had come aboard. Timothy knew best about his business and if he had consented the night before to leave it and take a pleasure trip of a week or two, it would be a bit unusual and a trifle rude to say the least, to suggest that he might want to terminate the trip and return to work. Reggie knew beyond all doubt that he had been hopelessly drunk when he had issued the invitation, but had the stranger been so too when he had accepted it? If he had been drunk and had known as little as Reggie what he was doing, he was now doubtless anxious to return; his presence in the city might be of vital importance to this business of employment agencies. Reggie judged that proprietors of those unknown firms must dress shabbily out of a rare delicacy not to hurt the feelings of their patrons, for it seemed to him impossible that a man could be as poor as Timothy looked. Reggie glanced deprecatingly at his guest and flushed slightly.

"I hope you can be my guest for the two weeks I asked you," said he diffidently, and added hastily, "that your business won't need your presence in the city."

Timothy thought of two weeks with plenty to eat and smoke and no pretense to be looking for a

job, two weeks of the peace and comfort he had known in the long ago. His worn-out nature craved physical comforts, and the rampart of pride that had grown with the years and poverty almost fell. To be certain of a place to sleep for two weeks was in itself an enormous temptation, and coupled with his abject soul weariness and loathing of his mode of living was well-nigh irresistible. He thought of the lower East Side, of the Mills Hotel when the gods had been kind and he had managed to make enough to enable him to pass the night there, of the park and the station-house when fate had been against him. But he thought of his clothes, of the hourly shame that would be his, of the soul-destroying contempt of the insignificant but infuriating Billings. No, the sheer physical comfort of a decent bed would not compensate for the insolent Billings, for the unconscious and wholly unintended, but nevertheless present, condescension of the rest of the guests.

He looked at Reggie and smiled kindly. "I am afraid we neither of us were quite sure what we were doing last night," said he. "I don't want to take you out of your course, but I am anxious to get back, and that's the truth."

Reggie nodded. "I am glad you told me. It won't take me out of my way at all. This trip was

a failure before it began. Willie wants to leave at the first port to save his own dignity, and I don't know but that some one else will go, too. Wish they all would. I've lost interest in it and would like to throw the thing up. But see here, we are so far out, that the best I can do is to get you back by to-morrow. I am awfully sorry."

"It wasn't your fault," said Timothy kindly.

"Power of drink, eh?" suggested Reggie with a laugh. "Willie and Monty can have the same room to-night. They have the same man, you know, and it will make Billings' work easier to have it concentrated. You keep Willie's room, and let my man help you."

Timothy murmured his thanks, thinking of the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat with the two clasp-pins and a button, and of the undergarments, conspicuous by their absence.

"A man servant," said he, "is like a divorce to a society woman — a necessity."

Reggie flushed and glanced at the lean old face sharply, questioningly. "If you don't want the services of my man—" he began slowly, diffidently.

"To me the services of a skilled man servant are indispensable," said Timothy.

Reggie flushed again. "I beg your pardon,"

said he. "Maybe I—I don't understand. I never—"

"Ran an employment agency," suggested Timothy as his host floundered for the right word.

Reggie laughed. "Just so. I am a bit dense, anyway. Money thickens a man's wits as zero weather does water."

"Not his wits, his perception," said Timothy.

"Won't you let me lend you some of my things for to-night?" begged Reggie. "I suppose you brought no luggage with you."

"I hope not," said Timothy fervently. "I own the suit I have on and the shoes and stockings, but nothing else, not even a hat, and certainly no job."

"Gad," said Reggie, "that's hard luck. But—look here, if you haven't any job, what's your rush to get back?"

"Billings," said Timothy frankly, "and the footman."

"Insolent?" asked Reggie angrily. "I will—"

"No," interrupted Timothy, "not insolent, just human."

Reggie nodded. "We are all pretty rotten, aren't we? But, you must let me lend you some things for to-day and to-night. I will send Dobbins to your room with a bunch and you can take your choice. Kick him out if he's not civil."

"Thank you," said Timothy. "I shall borrow one or two things."

He rose and Reggie went with him to the door of the stateroom in which he had awakened that morning to the full scrutiny of the supercilious Billings. Reggie held out his hand, contrite eyes on Timothy's face.

"Forget some asses' idea of a joke, and forgive me," he begged.

Timothy shook the offered hand. "There is nothing to forgive," said he, "if I am your—father."

Alone, Timothy decided that he would lie down for a while, that the unwonted richness of the food he had just eaten made him feel a bit queer and that the feeling would pass with a little quiet. The wind had freshened and a heavy sea was rolling. Through the port-hole, Timothy could see from where he lay a patch of dull gray clouds. He watched them a while, thinking over what had happened, until all thoughts vanished in the one wish to die. He didn't care for anything, any one. What did it matter that he was old, alone, shabby and poor? Nothing mattered if he could only die, immediately and without the cold stare of the red-faced Billings and the humble austerity of the meek Dobbins.

The latter attempting to enter a half hour later, a choice assortment of borrowed clothes over his arm, was met by the muffled, oddly abbreviated command to go away and never come back. With hand raised to knock for the fourth time, Dobbins paused and bent his head to listen, while a slow understanding of the situation dawned in his small prominent eyes. He turned obediently and sought his master.

He found him walking the deck with Miss Maynard, grim, miserable, desperate, his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his long coat, his hat pulled far over his tired eyes. The girl, tall, slim, graceful, with her wind-blown hair, walked beside him on the tipping deck with an ease that matched his own, and the quiet calm of indignation not yet forgotten, and forgiveness just bestowed, that far out-did his calmness of despair.

"Reggie," said she gently. "You swore you were only seasick and I believed you, absolutely."

"I know, dear —"

Then Dobbins approached and politely touched his hat.

"Well, Dobbins?"

"The — gentleman —" Dobbins hesitated, red and confused, sought for the gentleman's name, didn't know it and made a mental grab for a defi-

nition that would fit the gentleman in question and yet not refer to the unfortunate episode of the night before, which he realized his master was laboring at that moment to explain away.

"Father," suggested Reggie, with a grim laugh.

Helen flushed and turned her attention to the sea and the scurrying clouds. Dobbins coughed deprecatingly.

"Yes, sir. The—er—the gentleman is sea-sick and—er—will not let me in."

Reggie nodded and turned to Helen, amusement mingling with the penitence in his eyes. Dobbins discreetly withdrew.

"Father is sick, Helen. He doesn't want Dobbins near him and I don't blame him. A condescending servant is worse than death on the gallows. If you will excuse me, I shall go and see what I can do."

"Certainly," said Helen, with the affability of a suffragette addressing an anti. "Don't stay away on my account."

"If you insist on leaving when we get back to New York, you will let me see you alone again, first, won't you?"

"What is the use, Reggie?" she questioned plaintively.

"There is always use in asking for forgiveness,"

returned Reggie with a man's irrepressible lightness even in the midst of tragedy, and when he himself is suffering the most. "It is good for ~~the~~ soul."

"Very well, if you insist."

"I do, dear. Are you going in?"

She nodded and Reggie stood aside to let her enter.

He found Timothy's door securely locked, and it was only after repeated and earnest solicitations that he could get the old man to unlock it and let him in. The minute he turned the key, Timothy staggered back to the bed and Reggie found him there crouched on the edge, his face in his hands, his frayed old elbows on the knees of the equally shabby, painfully-short trousers, the ghastly shoes revealed in all their miserable holeliness. Reggie paused a moment, his eyes on the bent old head, leaning on the long, thin, knobby fingers, the old man's poverty ridiculously emphasized by the wide luxurious bed and the whole dainty room. A wave of tenderness swept over Reggie for the fraction of a second, holding him dumb with the pity of it, then he laughed to hide the choke in his voice and laid his hand gently on one bent old shoulder.

"Sick, eh? Want to die as soon as possible, I suppose, and have it over with?"

"Yes," moaned Timothy. "But by God, keep those damn servants out."

Weak from years of poverty, hard-work, worry and poor food when he didn't go hungry, Timothy's attack of seasickness went hard with him. Reggie tended him all that day with a tenderness that touched the old man deeply when he was capable of noticing anything but a surcease from his misery. Timothy was gentle and patient and Reggie's solicitude grew hourly, for the old man seemed in some way to be himself, grown old and friendless, and Reggie's somber eyes grew more somber and a bit wistful as he administered to his guest's comfort. Timothy like himself was a gentleman, like himself had started life with health, education and money, every promise of peace and happiness, and like himself, had stumbled, slipped, and was now sinking lower and lower year by year, crushed by some inborn inability to resist temptation, not vicious, not evil, simply weak with the weakness of a child's morality. And Reggie, watching the thin old face on the pillow, lined and seamed with scars of poverty and drink, saw himself fifty years hence. He drew the blankets up, adjusted the pillows and stumbled on deck, depressed and penitent, as though the fifty years had already gone and he was gazing into the wasted past.

A depression had settled on the whole party after the unfortunate climax of Willie's and Monty's joke, and Reggie decided boldly to terminate the affair as soon as they could return to New York. The company, save for Popplebaum, and perhaps Helen, were all mediocre, good-natured and stupid, bound in the same society by nothing but inherited money, money which none of them, except the keen-eyed German Jew, had the least ability himself to make. Ten dollar clerks and stenographers represented their mental capacity, just ordinary people, bored to death with themselves and one another. Not able to amuse themselves, they were equally incapable of amusing any one else. Willie's and Monty's terrible faux pas and Helen's determination to leave the yacht as soon as they returned to New York dismayed the others, and when Reggie that night at dinner announced that he was afraid the trip was over, that Timothy showed distinct symptoms of scarlet fever, their relief was pitiful.

Somebody suggested quarantine, but Reggie waved the suggestion aside.

"I can fix that," said he. "I know the inspector. He is patriotic only toward those who can't afford to buy his patriotism."

"Don't be so deuced cynical, Reggie," said Graham Farnum.

"Why isn't patriotism to money just as much patriotism as that to a country?" asked Reggie, turning dull eyes on his guest.

"It would certainly be a universal patriotism," admitted Elliot.

Reggie was blue, with a terrible soul-sick blueness, and Helen's desertion, as he looked on her departure at New York, all but overwhelmed him. He was reaching out blindly, miserably for life, not merely money, good clothes, big houses which were not home, married women who were neither wives nor mothers, but more or less brainless clothes-racks, nothing more. He realized in a vague way that he had missed something and Helen seemed to embody that something. He bade the rest of his guests good-by early the next morning as the yacht lay once more at wharf 5, joyously, but he watched Helen go ashore with the hurt wonder of a child deprived of its heart's desire and with the first impulse of a child for comfort, he had gone below to Timothy. It was still early in the morning and Timothy was sleeping soundly through exhaustion and a drug Reggie had given him the night before to quiet his nerves. And as the young man stood looking

down at the old face, half buried in the deep soft pillows, a sudden determination crept into his mind to take the cruise after all, but to take it with only one guest. Timothy was out of a job, he had said, his presence was not needed in New York. He hadn't a cent of money and it would be better for him to be where he could be well taken care of for the next few weeks. Billings and the guests had gone, so the objectionable features of the trip for Timothy were eliminated. The trip would do him good. Reggie wanted to be off by himself, away from everything and every one he had ever known and who better could he take with him than the living example of himself as he was destined to be? With a whispered apology to the old man, sleeping so profoundly, for the liberty he was taking, Reggie slipped on deck to give the needed orders, and with no more delay than was necessary, the yacht turned again and started out to sea.

It was two weeks before Timothy could come up on deck again, white and shaking, with hollow eyes and sunken cheeks. Reggie had explained the condition of affairs and the liberty he had taken in putting out to sea with his unconscious guest, but Timothy had been too sick at the time to realize just what he said, and he came on deck, cringing

within at the ordeal of facing the rest of the guests and Billings' supercilious stare.

"Yes, they are all gone," repeated Reggie as he and Timothy paced the deck after lunch, the salt wind whipping the color into the old man's thin face, the vast panorama of blue sky and blue sea absorbing the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat fastened with two clasp-pins and a button into the great realm of unimportant externals, which do not count here in the long run, hereafter, not at all. "All gone but you and me," and Reggie threw his arm over the bent shoulders still carried so jauntily.

Timothy sighed happily. "So few people," said he rather irrelevantly, "can see."

"Want to see," corrected Reggie bitterly.

"Can see," insisted Timothy, the young man's bitterness with thwarted life, having disappeared in the philosophy of age and never-ending poverty. "If they understood, they would want to see. People aren't mules, stubborn in self-absorbed blindness. They are moles, incapable of seeing anything but themselves."

They drifted in the warm October weather south as far as Rio Janeiro, and then sailed to the West Indies and cruised idly from port to port, wherever fancy led them. As the days passed, the color

came again into Timothy's thin cheeks, his eyes brightened and the bent shoulders straightened, his step grew younger and his carriage erect. And day by day the spirits of the ill-assorted pair grew nearer and nearer, and the instantaneous friendship each had felt for the other in that first glance across the long table, above the silver and the roses, ripened into the unconscious and steadfast love of one man for another. Timothy accepted his host's offer of clothes in the same spirit in which it was given, and borrowed some undergarments, pajamas and a dressing robe. But the two were not of a size and he preferred his own bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat to masquerading in a yachting suit and cap ludicrously too big for him. Dobbins' services were likewise firmly declined.

"Nobody has dressed me since my nurse left," he explained to Reggie with an amused laugh.

"I have always had a man," grumbled Reggie. "Wouldn't know what to do without one. Some fellows seem to be able to get along, though, by themselves, and by jove, they always look well, too."

"I know," said Timothy. "Once I couldn't go to dinner without a dress suit. I have found since that the only thing you need to enjoy a decent meal is an appetite."

Reggie nodded. "That's the matter with the

modern way of living. We ought to be more simple. We miss life in the complications of society, all of us, rich and poor." He leaned on the railing and gazed dully before him, frowning gloomily into the distance. "If I were sure I could find what I've missed, I would give Dobbins up, by jove."

"Don't do that," advised Timothy. "Life would become too simple for Dobbins, nothing but a hunt for another job. It's better for you to miss living through complication, than for him to miss it altogether through simplicity."

Reggie laughed. "That's true, too. We think too much nowadays, Tim. I swear we do. There's Helen—" he paused and shrugged drearily, falling silent as he recalled their last talk just before they had docked at New York.

CHAPTER VIII

A WOMAN'S LOGIC

HE had found the girl alone in the salon. She wore a long, rough gray coat with blue velvet collar and cuffs and a small blue hat to match. Her eyes were clear and steadfast, unconsciously, supremely above the world and its mundane cares, her firm mouth had softened as she mused alone, and her smooth rounded cheeks were flushed with perfect health and not a vital care or worry in her thirty years of life. Busy with her thoughts, he was almost by her side before she realized his presence and looked up. She was standing by a small table drawing on her gloves and she nodded as he approached. She glanced around quickly, saw that they were alone and spoke hastily, before he had time to begin the conversation.

"Reggie," she pleaded, "you won't think me so terribly rude leaving you like this, will you? I—I—couldn't stay."

"Dear," said Reggie, "Mr. Payne has scarlet fever. You aren't rude to leave. You have to go. But, why can't you stay, Helen, you and your

mother? We will get rid of the others, and Mr. Payne won't have scarlet fever. I was drunk that night, but I promise —”

She raised a slim gloved hand and her cheeks grew as red as her lips in the shade of the quaint little poke-bonnet effect she wore as a hat. “Please, Reggie, don't. Promises are no good. You swore to me that you were not drunk.”

“I lied, Helen. Forgive me,” said he simply, and reached for her hand.

“I believed you, absolutely,” said she, reproachfully, hastily thrusting her hands into the pockets of her long coat. Her eyes flashed angrily and she drew herself up with dignity. She was never given to self-analysis, and she thought that her feeling was one of impersonal protest against deceit. She did not realize that it was in reality simply wounded vanity that *she* should have been deceived.

Tall and slim, with her raised head and flushed cheeks she looked so young and girlish, that Reggie laughed tenderly and catching her shoulders, boldly drew her to him.

“Helen,” he whispered, “marry me, dear. I love you. I love you.”

She pulled herself free, raising her hands instinctively to straighten her hat. “I can not marry

you, Reggie. I do not care for you," she insisted angrily, the tears glistening in her eyes.

" You know you do," declared Reggie firmly. " You can't look me in the eyes and say honestly that you do not care. You know you can't. You have always cared for me, Helen."

" I have not," she protested vehemently, confused and startled by a sudden quick question of her own feelings and a remembrance of her unconscious reveries before he had found her there in the long room. " Indeed, I have not."

" Helen!" he reproved.

She flushed and her eyes fell in confusion, then she raised her head and looked at him, mistress of herself again. " I have not, Reggie. How could I let myself care for a man — in his cups? "

He flushed in his turn and drew back as though she had struck him. " I am not in my cups all the time," said he gently.

" I did not mean that literally," said she, entire mistress of herself now, watching him with cool young eyes, a woman judge who had never been tempted, an expert in the theory of goodness, unskilled in the practise because never having been forced to the test of overcoming temptation herself. " But knowing you as I do, Reggie, your life, your failings, how could I ever let myself care? "

"You are a good horsewoman, Helen," he reminded her. "Do you control your feelings as you do that team of grays?"

"Don't be unkind!"

"I don't mean to be. Forgive me."

He paced slowly up and down and she watched him, coolly, interestedly, a reformer with an interesting specimen for reformation. Suddenly he turned in his pacing and stopped before her, flinging out his hands, his longing for her virgin sweetness strong on him and yet mingled with a sick disgust for the hard judgment of untempted virtue.

"Sinners all, sinners all," he sneered. "But, Helen, did Christ hold aloft from sinners? The thief on the cross, was he better than I? He repented, can not I do the same?"

"He died," replied the girl coldly. "You have to live on. Will your repentance last? To repent and die is easy, to repent and live — Reggie, can you do it? How long do you think your repentance would last?"

"God," cried the man, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and turning again to his monotonous pacing of the room. "God protect men and children from the pitiless logic of the modern female."

"Years of misery will create logic in a fool," snapped the girl.

"You've had no misery," returned Reggie. "You don't know what misery is. Look at that poor devil I brought on board the other night if you want to see what misery is."

"Lack of money isn't misery. It is poverty. Misery only comes through those you love. When you see your father, brother, husband, a drunkard, that's misery, whether one be rich or poor."

Her white face flamed like his, her bosom rose and fell, and through her warm moist lips her breath came in tiny gasps. "Do you think that I have not learned the lesson of my sex — forgiveness of the man at the expense of the children? What honor would it be to me to bear your children with their inheritance of drink and unbridled passions? I am rich, surfeited with money, but I would love my children, every inch of me, and I would rather shrivel up and die in sterile old-maidhood than see a son of mine like you."

She was fighting for her own soul, fighting a return of the boy and girl love, the attraction he had always held over her and that had simply lain dormant with the years, not died as she had thought it had.

"Helen," he moaned, raising one hand as though she had struck him, his face growing ashen gray.

But the girl rushed on, pitiless, untempted, young

and pure, with all the strength and positiveness of her untried years that had never stood on the mountain heights and been shown the city below in the valley. "How would I be your wife before God any more than one or all of those girls who have given you themselves? Of course, a minister would bless our union, the beginning of years of unhappiness for children yet unborn. But for all that, what more could I give you than those other girls gave? How would my children be more healthy than theirs, except that I would have money with which to correct physically, as much as possible, the sins of the father—"

"Helen," Reggie walked back to her where she stood beside the table and looked gravely down at her with a grim empty laugh of self-control. "Helen, please. Let's talk of something else. I realize that you have a few slight objections to my suit and I won't press you to accept me, but don't let's talk about it. You see I am a man, and men haven't changed since Solomon took unto himself three hundred wives and has been looked upon through the ages as a good and holy man. The laws have changed, dear, that's all. The laws, and women's divine capacity for forgiveness—"

"At the expense of the children?"

"I know, dear, but Christ advised forgiveness,

seventy times seven, and it hardly seems possible He would do so at the expense of little children. It seems to me that there must be some divine scheme in His advice which we have not had faith enough to see."

"Faith," flashed the girl, "can faith cure a son besotted with his father's license?"

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove," quoted Reggie softly.

"Faith and love, Helen, that's what the world needs now. Not logic, not new laws, just the faith and love and mercy of Him who preached nothing else, and who knew, Helen, knew with divine wisdom that whereof He spoke." He turned his haggard eyes from the girl's face to the book he had unconsciously picked up in his nervousness.

There was a moment's silence. Helen was at a loss just what to say. Then Reggie threw the book down, straightened his shoulders and drew himself up as one who prefers to face his troubles standing.

"He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone." You are worthy to throw it, dear, and you throw well—but, Helen, hygiene, women's rights, the laws of heredity, none will count in the

long run against love." He raised her hand and kissed it gravely. "You are tired, dear, better go and lie down a while. I will send Dobbins to let you know when we dock."

"Reggie," said she gently, the fire gone from her delicate face. "I want to be your friend, always, no matter what you have done. We will be friends?"

"Friends, always, dear," he assented lightly. "I am glad you don't want to be a sister. Relatives are always so unescapable."

He walked with her to the door and held it open for her, as with a graceful little inclination of the head and an expression of mingled surprise and wistfulness in her eyes, she passed out.

Reggie often thought of this last scene Helen and he had had together, and once he mentioned the subject tentatively to Timothy.

"Did you ever love a woman, Tim?" he asked as they lingered over their cigars and wine after dinner one night.

It was growing cold and raw. There was a hard wind blowing and a high sea running. The lamps were lighted, the curtains drawn and the gas log in the fireplace hummed merrily as the yacht steamed steadily north, her trip for that season almost over.

Timothy nodded and watched a smoke wreath form and break.

"Did she marry you?"

"Yes," said Timothy.

"Didn't say anything about hygiene, about heredity?" questioned Reggie. "Didn't turn you down for eugenic reasons?"

"No," said Timothy simply. "She loved me."

"I'll bet it was forty years ago," said Reggie, reaching for his glass. "The modern female, Tim, unless she was poor and wanted your money, wouldn't have married you, wouldn't have allowed herself to think of you."

"If she loved me," began Timothy argumentatively, the wine going to his head in joyous waves of loquaciousness.

Reggie sneered. "She wouldn't have loved you," said he. "The modern female doesn't love, Tim. She just thinks."

That night Dobbins, with the help of the steward, quietly and steadily, got them both to bed.

"'A short life and a merry one,'" remarked the steward cheerfully, glancing down at the prostrate red-faced Reggie, snoring with great puffs of whisky-soaked breath.

"A long souse and a dirty one," parodied Dobbins, picking up his master's clothes. "You put

'em to bed as long as I have, Miller, and you won't see where the 'life' or the 'merry' comes in."

"Maybe so," agreed Miller, "but he can afford it."

"He can't afford to be a drunkard," returned Dobbins severely, made hard as one too decent to do the same himself becomes from too close and intimate an association with depravity.

Reggie was the first to get up and half fearful of what he would find, he went at once to Timothy's room. Timothy was still asleep and somehow in the wide bed, among the many blankets and thick pillows, he looked so old and thin and pitiful, lying on his back, his face still flushed, his mouth open, Reggie felt a hot disgust mingled with the self-pity he had felt the night before when going over his wrongs with the old man. It seemed to him as it always did that Timothy was he himself.

"Myself," he muttered, "twenty years from now."

Timothy's stentorian breathing had filled the room, and Reggie had thought himself alone with the old man and had unconsciously spoken aloud. Dobbins' voice in reply startled him. Dobbins was a humble little person and never spoke unless spoken to. Reggie turned in as much surprise that his man should speak as at what he said.

"You put him to bed every night or so in that condition for the next five years, and he won't be," said Dobbins.

Reggie regarded him coldly. "I thought, Dobbins," said he, "that I was alone. I was speaking to myself."

"Yes, sir," agreed Dobbins, meek and humble once again. "Beg pardon, sir."

Reggie looked at him, and for the first time saw the glimmer of a man in the small eyes in which he had been so used to seeing only the servility of the servant. Even as he caught it, the glimmer died. After all, one must live. Dobbins doubtless considered it better to be a servant with a job than a man without one.

The next day the yacht steamed once more up to her New York dock, the cruise at an end three months after it had begun. Timothy dressed still in the too short trousers, the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, fastened with two clasp-pins and a button, minus the undergarments, but with a derby of Dobbins on his head, Reggie's being too large for him, leaned on the railing and watched the outlines of the city growing nearer and nearer with the dull despair of a prisoner, who, escaped for a few brief weeks, sees again the walls of the prison behind which he must spend his life. But the old

head in the derby was raised gaily, the bent shoulders were carried more jauntily than Reggie's own, for Reggie had nothing to conceal by a bluff, and Timothy chatted indifferently as he pulled at the last decent cigar he was ever likely to smoke.

Of the two, Reggie was the more depressed. Timothy needed money terribly and yet how could he offer his guest charity? Timothy's clothes and financial status precluded the possibility that a loan could ever be considered anything else. In the three months that had gone, the old man had for the first time in years, Reggie realized, met his own class again on equal footing, an honored guest taken at his personal worth with no question of money. There had been none of the galling humiliation of a poor relative living on his financially superior family. To mention money now would spoil the memory of the three months, a well-nigh perfect memory for both as their friendship had grown and ripened. Reggie glanced at the lean old face by his shoulder — clean-shaved, refined, the face of a gentleman — and wondered if the years of poverty had changed the soul of a once high-spirited man. Would Timothy prove to be that rarity — one who could rise above money — or was he too tarnished with the universal greed? Reggie told himself he was a cad to doubt his friend,

to discount his knowledge obtained by three months' close association, but it is an age of doubt, when nothing is taken for granted, not even one's God.

"Tim," said Reggie abruptly, laying his hand on the old man's shoulder, "Tim, you and I can't part like this."

Timothy flushed and turned full on his host. Reggie saw the fear in the old eyes that had been in his, that the subject of money was somehow to spoil a perfect memory.

"Van," said he earnestly — he was the only one who never called Reggie by his childish nickname — "Van, friends don't part. They may not see each other again, as you and I may not, but they are friends still."

"You're right there," returned Reggie. "We are friends. Time and place can't change that, and by God, Tim, neither can money."

He paused desperately, his hand unconsciously tightening on the shoulder on which it rested. "Tim," he pleaded after a moment, made bold by the old man's silence, "Tim, just a loan, between friends."

"It's a strong friendship that can stand a loan," replied Timothy. "Don't spoil it all."

"Money can't spoil our friendship."

"It can spoil anything," snapped Timothy with

sudden heat fired by thoughts of the unhappy past. "It can part friends, it can ruin virtue, it can turn a woman's love to hate — the lack of it. Van, between you and me, there must be nothing but the last three months."

He turned with a laugh to hide his feelings and leaned again over the rail. "We're getting back, lad, back to little old New York."

"Just like a woman," muttered Reggie, dropping the subject of the loan and thinking suddenly of Helen, somewhere up there, among the teeming thousands, among the rush and clang and noise. "Thinking only of herself and whether you will make her suffer, not giving a damn whether your soul's on the road to Heaven or hell."

CHAPTER IX

BACK TO THE SLUMS

THEY parted on the wharf at the foot of the street where Reggie's car was waiting for him.

"Good-by, Van," said Timothy. "Good luck!"

"Good-by, Tim," said Reggie.

They wrung each other's hands and parted, Timothy to disappear down the narrow street among the warehouses and tenements he knew so well, while Reggie, with the capable Dobbins, climbed into the limousine and slammed the door.

It was December, raw and damp, with slush on the streets and sidewalks and a promise of snow in the lowering clouds.

Timothy was cold, and he paused a moment over the warm grating of a cheap baker's shop to gaze into the unattractive window and get his bearings again before he plunged into the frenzied search for work. The three months' rest had improved his physical appearance. His cheeks were fuller with a better color, his eyes bright, his hair was well cut and his face smooth-shaven. But mentally, Tim-

othy was on the point of letting go, of giving up, entirely. The long rest had unnerved him, made him see in the clear perspective of distance how revolting his life had become. Before, in the rush and heat of the grim necessity of the moment, he had not had time to think — as one in the midst of danger will act promptly and well, but when out of the fight for a moment, given time to realize the danger, will need more nerve and courage to return than to have remained in the first place. Timothy had lost his hold, got out of step with the squalid life around him that he had known as his own. He had been more worn out mentally than physically and when the change had come, his body had responded more readily to the rest and the good food than his brain could respond to the peace and quiet. His tired mind, relaxed for a time, seemed incapable of pulling itself together again, of getting up and going on with the ghastly travesty of life.

Gazing into the shop-window, he wondered dully if they would want a dish-washer or some one to scrub floors and clean windows. The place certainly needed cleaning, but Timothy could not bring himself to enter. He had had a good lunch and was not hungry enough yet to be driven to do anything. He put his hands into his pockets and started up the street, unconsciously assuming his

old air of busy importance, discarded now for the last three months.

"Don't act as if you were out of a job," he had advised Patrick once, "or you will never get another. Bluff gets more jobs than competency ever could."

"And keeps them too," Patrick had agreed. "Competency needs a horn a damn sight more than an auto does, and should blow it more often unless it wants to be hauled to a poorhouse."

"It's a damned world," Timothy had summed up, biting off the thread with which he was mending his coat.

So Timothy started up the street with the brisk appearance of a man on the way to keep an appointment. The whole place seemed inexpressibly dirty and dreary, the tall buildings, the narrow streets blocked and crowded with drays, trucks and clanging cars, the people, thin and fat, old and young, shabby and more shabby. He thought of Mrs. McBride and Molly O'Brien in their sheltered comfortable lives, pleased with themselves and joyously conscious of superiority over shop-girls and stenographers for the simple reason that they knew the right fork to use, the latest thing in calling cards.

Noticing familiar landmarks, he glanced up and

found himself in front of one of the employment agencies he occasionally patronized, and more from habit than intention, he mounted the narrow iron steps and pushed open the door.

The room was the same as he had known it, only dirtier, smaller, more crowded, more hopelessly depressing. Timothy glanced at the faces of those waiting for jobs. Some were fat, some stupid, some thin, others were keen, clever, stolid, but all showed, more or less successfully concealed, anxiety, mingled with a pitiful hope in the too eager eyes, and Timothy thought of the yacht, of Elliot, of Willie and Monty, differing from many of the young fellows in the crowded dirty room only in externals and the easy security of money. They were no brighter than the majority of those present and not so bright as some. They had done nothing but inherit money, and yet they themselves and the world too looked on them as in some way superior. The fat Monty had in him the making of a fairly good butcher's or grocer's clerk, while Willie Collins, Timothy realized, could at a pinch hold down a job as waiter.

The attendant at the desk nodded to Timothy as his turn came, noticed something familiar in the immaculately clean old man, looked at him again more sharply, recognized him and decided that he

had spent some time on the Island to his physical advantage. There was vacant a place as dish-washer in a large cheap restaurant on the Bowery and Timothy mechanically took the address and with his gentle air of courtesy thanked the attendant.

Still indifferent to what happened, he went to the place and obtained the work with no feeling of elation or thankfulness, simply one of listless wonder that he had got a job so easily and quickly. He was to be there in time to eat his supper and begin work at eight that evening. He glanced at the clock as he passed out, saw it was only a little past four and decided to hunt up Patrick O'Brady and 178 Second Avenue.

The sixth story back of 178 Second Avenue was no longer occupied by Patrick O'Brady. He had departed for more affluent quarters, and a woman stenographer, Timothy learned, spent sleepless nights on the lumpy cot and gazed at the dismal vision of her white face and fading youth in the cracked mirror above the chest of drawers that had served Patrick as library, cupboard and refrigerator as well. The stenographer Timothy came upon in Mrs. Russell's room, sitting in limp dejection on the bed, her shabby hat, which she had just removed, in her hand, her hair in its frowsy attempt

to heighten her vanishing youth crushed flat on her forehead where the hat had rested on it.

Mrs. Russell, who had come to the door in answer to Timothy's knock, looked fat and flabby and unhealthy. All her small economies of dress, the mending and patching which had seemed so remarkably good to Timothy three months ago, now emphasized rather than detracted from the old woman's poverty-stricken appearance. They were pitiful in their garish prominence. Mrs. Russell's face was a pasty yellow, her fat cheeks hung loosely, and her lower teeth having broken away and not been replaced, her mouth sunk in at the corners, making her look older and more dilapidated. Her expression was an odd mingling of indifference and pathetic patience, of hardness and the tenderness of all good women.

She looked sharply at Timothy, noticed his freshened color and brightened eyes and decided like the attendant at the employment agency that the Island had done him good, but wishing that he could have avoided it because of the mark it leaves, which is unmistakable after a time and hard to rub out when one is old and has lost ambition. Timothy held out his hand, a little ceremony that still clung to him from the days of long ago, and Mrs. Rus-

sell took it with the listless indifference of one who has long discarded ceremony as a waste of time and strength better saved for the necessities of life.

"I'm glad you're back, Tim," said she, slipping out into the hall and half closing the door behind her that the stranger to Timothy sitting on her bed might not hear. "But how did they manage to send you up?"

Timothy patted the old hand he held and laughed gaily, reassuringly, Dobbins' derby tucked under his arm. "I haven't been spending any time on the Island, my dear lady," said he. "I have been taking a cruise in the South with a party of friends."

Mrs. Russell nodded. It is hard to fool the poor. "If you want to call it so," said she. "Life is hard, I know, and when drink has its hold on a man —"

Timothy looked straight into the faded eyes. "On my word of honor as a gentleman," said he, "I have not been sent up."

They looked straight into each other's eyes—the fat old woman and the thin old man—and she believed him. "I'm glad of that, Tim," said she. "Come in."

She opened the door and Timothy followed her in. Mary Fisher, on the bed, bowed graciously in answer to Timothy's bow of introduction and rose,

picking up the shabby coat hanging over the foot of the bed.

"I must go," she murmured.

"What's your rush?" asked Mrs. Russell kindly.
"Sit and rest a while, why don't you?"

But the girl shook her head. "I've got some mending to do, and between jobs is a good time to do it," she added, with a hard little laugh.

Timothy held the door open for her and she trailed listlessly out, her coat over one arm, her hat in her hand, a tall gaunt woman, white-faced and hollow-eyed, youth behind her and nothing before.

Timothy, more hopelessly depressed than ever, shut the door and beheld Annie in the one rocking-chair the room afforded, on her lap her tiny baby, red and thin and dirty, its poor little head covered with scrofula from its unknown father, its mussy clothes smelling close and sour. The girl's hand was on the chair-arm idle, her head rested on the chair-back and her eyes were half closed. She still wore the gray dress all in a piece that had been cheaply stylish the year before with the semblance of a fit. It hung now baggy and dejected on the wasted form, the humped shoulders and sunken breast. The puffs and rats forming the pyramid of hair that had protruded in a perilous psyche knot

behind, were still arranged with the listless indifference that marked all her actions.

"Ah, Annie," greeted Timothy cordially. "I'm glad to see you." And he patted the thin hand on the chair-arm. "That's a fine boy, a fine boy. It looks like you, Annie." And he laid a finger diffidently on the small red face of the baby born old.

"Girl," said Annie with the brevity for which she was famous, glancing at the baby and then away.

"A pretty baby," repeated Timothy kindly. "How are you, Annie?"

"Sick," said Annie shortly.

"You will pick up when spring comes," declared Timothy cheerfully, seeking for some ray of hope in the fog of dreariness that invaded the room.

"Can't," said Annie, eyes closed. "Consumption." And she gave a hollow rasping cough.

Timothy patted her hand with added tenderness. "Maybe you can, Annie, maybe you can. Sometimes one has a bronchial cough —"

"Society says it's the real thing," interrupted Annie, rocking slowly to hush the baby that had begun to whimper.

"The Society makes mistakes," declared Timothy. "Again and again. Besides, consumption

isn't fatal nowadays, Annie. Plenty of rest and fresh air —”

“Plenty of money,” said Annie shortly, with no bitterness at the state of affairs, merely speaking the unanswerable truth.

“The Society sees to that —”

“Overcrowded. No room for me.”

“Well, well,” said Timothy, “something can be done. I shall see to it.” He patted her hand again and turned to Mrs. Russell.

But the last three months had gone as hard on her as on Annie. She was getting too old to compete successfully with the newer and younger lights of her profession. Her customers were as few as Patrick's clients had been, and her health was failing as her business waned and her age increased. Her heart troubled her at night so she could hardly sleep and her stomach was always upset, nervous dyspepsia, the doctor at the dispensary had said.

“Prolonged poverty,” growled Timothy.

With the garrulousness of age and the pleasure of a practically new and sympathetic listener Mrs. Russell poured forth her troubles. Timothy, as he listened, thought of the yacht, of Helen, dainty and winsome and sweet, of Mrs. McBride in her superb health, Molly O'Brien with not a care or serious thought in the world except the un-

spoken one of the commonness of her origin. Mingling with his thoughts and his muttered monosyllables of sympathy, the old woman's voice droned on. It was a pathetic story of misery, of depressing economies, of poverty, stupefying brain and heart and soul, stunting mental growth, dulling sympathy, and all so familiar to Timothy, so often heard by him, and so well known by personal experience.

He rose as the cheap alarm clock on the mantel pointed to the hour of six. His relief at escaping from the two worn-out, dismal women overflowed in good-natured encouragement and promises it was utterly impossible for him to keep.

"I have a position—" It was a "job," in normal minutes when he was not trying to cheer up another, and the unvarnished truth would be relished rather than otherwise.

"Janitor work?" asked Madame Russell, wiping her old tear-red eyes on her apron.

"No, no," said Timothy loftily. "Quite different — really a very good place, over near Twenty-third," and he waved his hand vaguely in the general direction of Sherry's and the Waldorf-Astoria. "Of course," he added modestly, with a humbleness that was somehow reassuring as foretelling better things, "of course, it's not much in itself, but it leads to higher things, and the pay is very good.

So don't you worry. I shall see to your rent, Mrs. Russell, and fix you up fine. We may be able to send Annie and the baby to the country — yes, I am quite sure we shall be able to — quite sure."

"A little rest and fresh air would do her a world of good," agreed Mrs. Russell, nodding encouragingly at the girl.

"Certainly it will," declared Timothy heartily, while a faint gleam of interest appeared in Annie's faded eyes. It was only talk, she realized with the depressing knowledge of past experiences when all hope had proved to be merely talk, but still it sounded nice, and by hard work one sometimes fooled one's self into the expectation that this time, anyway, it might be more. "It will be everything for her, cure her entirely. She is simply run down from overwork," and he patted her hand again tenderly. "Well, I must go, but I'll be back to-morrow and let you know how things are coming along."

Still talking, planning with a reassuring air of busy cheerfulness, Timothy picked up his hat and departed, leaving Annie vaguely encouraged, and Mrs. Russell bright and happy with renewed hope.

For a week Timothy clung to his job desperately, fearfully. Every day he called on the two women, talked vaguely of what he was doing, of getting

Annie away, and seeing about a better place for Mrs. Russell. His meals were free, obtained at the restaurant, and as he spent the days dozing in the various public rooms, libraries, Y. M. C. A. and employment agencies, which he frequented now because they afforded a place to rest off the streets, and sleeping an hour or two on Mrs. Russell's bed beside the dirty, skinny little baby, or in the high-backed rocking-chair, his expenses were practically nothing. His wages he gave punctually, intact, to Mrs. Russell and she spent them on milk for the baby, medicine for Annie and things for herself. The amount was so small even in its entirety that she believed Timothy when he assured her that it was only a part of what he made and that he kept the rest for himself.

When she taxed him with not getting himself another pair of shoes, he said that he had, but that he was on his feet so much, he found he simply couldn't wear them. He did buy another pair of stockings and kept himself fairly smooth-shaved. His old air of general affluence and well-being did not desert him, merely grew as his troubles grew, and Mrs. Russell perforce accepted his statements, though she watched him with keen anxious eyes.

Annie's people had cast her off in her shame

and she spent most of her time in Mrs. Russell's room. The baby lived there altogether. Miss Fisher was more and more often to be found there, also, finding it harder and harder to get a place and keep it, for she was near-sighted and had trouble with her hearing. Her deafness made her nervous and the more nervous she got, the deafer she got. Before the week was out, Timothy had taken upon himself the responsibility of the three women and struggled manfully, hopelessly, wearily, to meet it. But he was old and slow. The dirty dishes piled up faster than he could wash them and one night, about two weeks later as he turned up for his supper and night's work, the management told him that a younger man had been given the job. That evening he stood in the bread-line and with his last fifteen cents, which he had intended for a shave, he spent the night at Mills Hotel.

Completely worn out by his fortnight of forced and uncomfortable rest, he fell asleep at once and slept soundly in the crowded room, on the hard narrow bed.

The previous three months' rest had improved Timothy's health so that his craving for liquor was not so strong as when he was half starved for months at a time. His hand had grown steadier, and with more hope than previously, he applied for

the job of directing envelopes and got it. He was to receive a dollar a thousand and that first day, he made fifty cents. He stood again that night in the bread-line and having eaten his supper in the warmth of a storehouse, he walked the weary distance to 178 Second Avenue, knowing that the three women would be worried for his sake at his non-appearance.

They had been worried, and in Mrs. Russell's eyes was fear mingled with pity lest she see him drunk again, thick of speech and dull of eye. Timothy laughed her fears away, and chatted in the raised voice he used for Mary Fisher's benefit. He told stories about the yacht, the places they had visited, and talked with redoubled assurance and a convincing air of his clerical position. When he left, he slipped the fifty cents in the baby's thin little hand as it lay asleep on the bed.

For another week he struggled. Once he made a dollar, but it was only once, and that night he had writer's cramp in his hand so terribly he could not use it at all next day, and ever afterward, only slowly, making only a quarter a day. The depression he had for a time lifted from the women, returned now on all of them. Timothy, they realized, tried his best, and they were grateful to him, but he was, like themselves, no good physically. Annie's

rasping cough increased as she scrubbed and swept out endless office buildings. Mary Fisher's deafness grew with every recurring failure to keep a place, and Mrs. Russell's last client seemed to have come and gone. She watched her gallant old friend with pitying compassion, and where Timothy had cheered her, she now laughed and chatted to cheer him and keep at bay his craving for drink, forgetful of her own stomach trouble, her palpitating heart and frayed nerves.

From the change in the hours of his visits, she knew that he had lost his first position at night work which had seemed to hold such promise, according to him, and worked now in the daytime. As his evenings and nights were now free, her worry for his sobriety increased. One evening it was realized. Timothy did not turn up that night, and next morning when he did appear, she knew that he had been drinking again. Worn with the one-sided struggle, his endurance had snapped and in a fury of physical protest, Timothy drank himself into insensibility, and oblivious for the time being to earthly cares, had left the question of his night's lodging to others.

CHAPTER X

HEART AGAINST HEAD

REGGIE went directly to his club, took a swim, played billiards with Willie and the fat Monty whom he found there, amiably willing to be friends again, read the papers, chatted and drank a bit with this one and the other. Then, feeling cheerful and contented, glad to be back among the joyous crowd, the lights and life and gaiety, he turned up his coat collar and walked home, up the avenue for the pleasure of watching the hurrying throng, of mingling again with his kind.

His mother's limousine drew away from the curb as he approached and in the hall he found his mother just returned from a bridge party. She was a short little person and would have been fat but for the marvelous skill of her maid. Her eyes were bright and soft, like Reggie's, her nose was small and straight, her mouth, full-lipped, pouting and fretful. Her forehead was long and low, her brows were delicate and her skin was white and healthy, with a faint wild-rose flush that would never have been taken for aught but nature's handi-

work, with so much cleverness was it applied. Her hair, which would have been gray but for constant vigilance, was a soft yellow and being naturally curly, escaped here and there around her ears in a way that with less attention would have been mussiness, but which now lent an air of happiness to her small face and a careless youth to her appearance. She was all in white with an ermine hat shading her face, an ermine stole around her graceful sloping shoulders and a great ermine muff adorned with a bunch of crimson holly berries in her hands. As a girl she had been winsomely pretty, and with the help of limitless money, she retained a great deal of her girlish charm which had consisted principally of joyous irresponsibility toward every one and everything.

She turned now as the door opened and seeing Reggie, tossed her great muff gaily aside and gave him both her hands with charming abandonment.

"Reggie, you dear boy," she cried, rising on tiptoe to kiss him. "I have been worried to death about you. You wrote me that you were only to be gone for a month at least, and when I returned in November and found that you were still away, I was quite upset, I was, my dear, indeed."

She squeezed his hands and turned hastily to the letters and cards piled on the small hall table.

"I am in such a hurry," she apologized merrily, "that I really can't listen to your adventures now. You must tell me what you have been up to some day when I get a moment to myself and can scold you, as I know I should." She sighed wearily. "'Society, thy name is Folly.' Reggie, you have an armful of letters. This one must be an invitation to the Hunts' ball to-night. Do go, my dear. I am going for a few minutes. Your mammy is still belle of the ball, boy, when she goes." She nodded brightly and paused a moment to give him a quick little pat on the arm. "Pleasure isn't my only aim in life, though," she rattled on, running hastily over her cards and letters. "I am chair-woman on some committee or other, to help something or other — lame cats, I think it is, or maybe it is shoeless horses — I am sure I have forgotten which. My secretary knows though, thank heaven — It is something, anyway, and it meets every so often. I have never attended any of the meetings but I mean to when I return in the spring."

"Where are you off to now?" asked Reggie, amused by her chatter.

"To Maine, to Deer Island — just fancy, in the dead of winter. I shall freeze to death, I know, but it's less painful to freeze than to burn, and a

sort of pleasant memory some day, when you may need it." She laughed.

"Why do either?" asked Reggie, turning over his mail.

"Society, dear boy. The first commandment was hopelessly broken when Society with a capital S was created. The Wanes have a place up there and we are going to have a 'regular, old-fashioned, New England Christmas'—B-r-r-r! It makes me shiver just to think of it. The minute I can I am going to leave and go straight to Palm Beach or Bermuda."

Reggie laughed. "Did I get a bid?"

"Yes, you did, love, but I refused it for you. It is so distressing to be my age, and to have a son of your age always present. If you could wear kilts, or Buster Brown suits with dignity and grace I would love to have you come along. I know you would enjoy it. But age must be served." She gathered up her wraps and started for the stairs. "I am going to the Bradleys' to dinner, Reggie, and must dress. Do make yourself at home," she added absent-mindedly and trailed up the stairs a bit wearily and decidedly short of breath.

"Stairs," said she, pausing at the top and turning to Reggie who had followed her, "stairs are as bad as grown children to reveal one's age."

"Why be ashamed of your age?" asked Reggie.
"It's a common malady."

"I know. I want to be old, too." She nodded and sighed, one hand on her heart as she puffed heavily. "Some day when I am strong-minded enough, I will, Reggie, I will be as old as I feel. I am so tired, so tired of being young. I do not think I should feel so old, if I didn't try so hard to be young."

"I wonder why a person is considered eccentric when he does what he wants," mused Reggie.

"Because he would be, my love. None of us ever does what he wants to. Yes, Mary, I am coming," to the maid who passed through the hall with an armful of dresses. "My mistress," she added in a whimsical aside to Reggie. "We kill ourselves living up to our servants."

Reggie laughed and went on to his own room.

He went to the Hunt ball that night and from there started on his usual round of "pleasure." In the gray dawn of a cold December day, Dobbins with philosophical indifference undressed him and got him to bed.

It was two days later and Reggie, in dressing-gown and slippers, lounged before the huge fireplace in his sitting-room. The day was cold and stormy, snow and sleet were falling persistently.

The slush on streets and sidewalks was ankle high, and a raw wind from the Battery nipped through the thickest clothing. No one who could remain in was out, and Reggie chuckled as he thought of his mother in the unexplored wilds of Deer Island in the middle of winter. The room was warm and cozy. Dobbins attended the fire with solicitude and the air was sweet with violets out of season, on mantel, desk and piano. Reggie's breakfast was on a small table by his elbow, but he had touched nothing but some milk. His head ached dullly from a prolonged carousal and there was a nasty taste in his mouth, both physically and metaphysically. A number of letters had come in the morning post and there were still a few that had come in his absence and which no one had forwarded to him. He had been too indifferent to answer them yet and he turned them over now listlessly, reading the addresses in the corners of the envelopes and trying carelessly to determine from whom they were and what the contents were before he opened them.

The bottom one attracted his attention and he drew it out, puzzled and amused. It was a long envelope such as legal papers come in, but cheap, and with no address in the corner to suggest from whom it came. Reggie's address was typed neatly on it giving no clue as to handwriting. It had been

mailed in New York a day or two after Reggie had started on his cruise as signified by the stamp. Reggie turned it over and over and finally opened it, amused and puzzled. Within were a number of sheets of foolscap, closely typed and with many ink insertions, and witnessed by two strangers as Reggie ascertained by turning at once to the end. It looked uninteresting and with the careless irresponsibility of his mother, he tossed it aside without reading. A letter, unnoticed among the rest of the sheets, fell out and Reggie picked it up and read it. It was short, hardly more than half of the sheet of foolscap on which it was typed.

“ Dear sir :

“ Enclosed, herewith, find legal papers of your adoption of Timothy Marshall Payne, Esquire, duly made out, signed and sealed according to law and as you instructed to be done.

“ Trusting that I may be favored with more of your business, I am, sir,

“ PATRICK O’BRADY,
“ Attorney-at-Law.”

Thoroughly nonplused, Reggie turned to the other papers and read them through carefully, then he lay back in his chair and laughed, remembering Timothy and their meeting. But there had been a gap after that until the moment when they came to their befuddled wits on board the *Helen*, which

neither of them could recall. This was the meaning of their persistent reiteration of "father," this was what they had been up to during that forgotten interval. Timothy was indeed, by adoption at least, Reggie's father, now. Patrick O'Brady had delivered the goods.

Reggie chuckled, too pleased with the whimsical development to take the papers to his lawyers. If there was a legal flaw in them somewhere, as he feared, he did not wish to know it. The idea tickled his fancy. He locked the papers away, determined to find the old man if possible. He decided not to put the hunt for him in the hands of detectives, knowing that it would hurt Timothy and that he would refuse to look on the papers other than as a joke played on two drunken fools. But for the next two weeks he and Dobbins searched the East Side, Dobbins regularly every day, Reggie between drinks, as it were. The old man could not be found, other affairs crowded in and the search was dropped.

In the months that followed, Reggie saw little of Helen. Their paths seldom crossed now. The friends who had once good-naturedly aided his suit and tried to bring them together at dances, teas and dinners, gave it up. Some went so far as to give up Reggie, himself. To a man going down

morally, all the world is a broken aeroplane, and Reggie was going fast. There was no doubt about it. Dobbins' round blank face grew haggard, for the man had grown to love the careless good-natured lad he had served so many years, and his lipless mouth was habitually closed firmly now in disapproval, while a vague worry was always in the small prominent eyes. He said nothing. But a sickening disgust was crowding out all tenderer feelings, and he put his master to bed more and more grimly as the days and weeks passed.

Mrs. Boggs departed on her round of visits and half the time Reggie did not know where she was. The two had nothing in common and seldom took the trouble to write to each other. Mrs. Boggs did not mean to be callous, did not think she was. She heard rumors more or less frequent and lurid, of Reggie's various escapades and wished that she could help him, but she had all the modern person's skepticism. A drunkard was incurable, a family affliction, to be borne as cheerfully as possible, and referred to as seldom as possible. There was no help. To worry about the unavoidable was foolish, so she did not worry. She didn't know how to. She never had. She put Reggie and his troubles aside with a weary shrug and a hopeless gesture of her tiny, well-manicured hands.

Reggie himself was imbued with the same hopelessness. A reformed drunkard was as rare as the dodo bird, a fabrication of the brain. In early youth there had been no incentive to exert the least strength of character and deny himself anything. Whatever he had wanted from babyhood up had been given him, promptly and gladly. Childish griefs and disappointments had been kept from him by a large staff of nurses, tutors, valets. His love for Helen and her refusal of it was the one great disappointment in his life and he did not know how to meet it. He felt helpless, inexperienced, like a two-year-old deprived of a toy. There seemed nothing to do but howl. His love was not strong enough to pull him up and give him the character the years had withheld. So Reggie went his unobstructed way, while for a time his friends sought to head him off, finally gave it up, and at last dropped him. How he steered clear of the eager hands reached forth to drag him into the net of matrimony and help some climbers upward, always puzzled Dobbins. But drunk or sober, more strenuously when drunk than when sober, he clung with all of a stubborn man's perversity to the idea that Helen was the only woman he would ever marry. In his drunken moments, it was often a delusion of his that she and he were married.

Helen heard of his life with a mingling of relief and sorrow. She was glad that she had stood by her principles and refused him, but her heart softened with pity for the boy she had known and loved, and more than once she had been on the verge of sending for him and consenting to marry him. Sometimes she questioned herself when these softer moments were on her, with a vague unrest. Had she done right to cast him off? Marriage never yet cured a man of drink, she told herself over and over, but at times she could not put aside the feeling that she was a traitor to that boy she had known. Her chum was sinking and she stood safely on the bank and watched him sink. She could not drag him to land, she assured herself. But what if she went down with him? The idea was foolish, utterly illogical, but it came again and again to torment her. With her well-trained mind, her splendid self-control, she reasoned herself out of the idea, with always more and more ease, quicker and quicker. When thus tempted to yield, quixotically to surrender herself and her life to the man who would always be the first in her thoughts and heart, no matter how hard she struggled to put him out, thought of their children always deterred her and held her firm. In this age of eugenics and sex hygiene, the thought of children and their inherit-

ance was not unmaidenly. Child-birth was merely a physical process, like any other that takes place in the body, but which people did not mention frankly in all society. Helen often thought about it and in moments of self-doubt which sometimes came to her now that she was worried about Reggie, wondered if she did not know too much, if a little ignorance on the subject would not have made the idea of marriage more alluring to contemplate, easier to enter. She put the doubt vigorously aside. It was ridiculous. One could not know too much. The welfare of the future generations depended on it. The wonder if under the circumstances there would be much of a future generation was sternly suppressed as quickly as asked. Better no children than ignorance. She eagerly turned to her work among the poor, helping by the most approved methods of philanthropy taught in the great school at which she had studied but which had not been the still greater school of life.

She put reason, logic, cold, clear-cut, indisputable, as taught in the former school, above the dictates of the heart, above the foolish impulses of unreasoning, generous nature. She helped as she had been taught to help, but she did not understand, for she had never gone to the greatest school there is and experienced poverty herself. Those she helped

never dreamed of calling her friend. With the hysterical hope of the hopeless, they put aside in her presence their real feelings and sought vainly for that optimistic blindness which she seemed to expect in all and which she cultivated in herself as one of the foremost tenets of her faith. Frank pessimism, though backed by a grim determination to fight and keep on fighting to the end, was to be discouraged sternly. She thought that she had discouraged it from the forced optimism of her dependents who responded thus because she gave them help and they saw she wanted them to appear hopeful. Committees and sub-committees worked hard and well under her able leadership. Homes were founded for this and that, trained nurses were sent here and there, free classes for everything practical were formed and encouraged. But no tiny grimy youngster was folded in sheltering, motherly arms, no dirty baby tears were kissed away from little pinched faces by one with a heart too big for creeds and corporations of philanthropy; no heavily burdened woman was clasped closely in the embrace of a sister and allowed simply to weep out her soul's weariness on the breast of one who knew and sorrowed with her.

It was all very scientific, very capable and very effective, and Helen entered the work with vigor

and education and too much money, though she did not know it, and thought that hers was the way of the carpenter who nineteen hundred years ago labored in the fields of Galilee.

CHAPTER XI

THE SECOND MEETING

ONE day late in spring, Reggie lounged dispiritedly in his room. His head ached and his drawn face and hollow eyes showed the effects of his winter of dissipation. He was thin and looked wretchedly sick.

The day was warm and sweet. Through the open windows came the rattle of the passing traffic on the street below, mingled with the unmistakable breath of the spring-time, of open fields and apple orchards, tumbling brooks and joyous bird songs. Great white clouds drifted by overhead and a breeze from the Hudson rustled the papers on the table and diffused through the room the scent of the flowers in the window boxes and on mantel, table and desk.

Reggie finished reading a description of the Abingtons' week-end, tossed the newspaper aside and called Dobbins, busy in an adjoining room.

"Dobbins."

"Sir?"

"Did I get an invitation to the Abbingtons' weekend?"

"No, sir," replied Dobbins, gazing discreetly over his master's head out of the open window to the tree tops in the park across the street.

Reggie's pale cheeks flushed angrily and he nervously reached for and lighted a cigarette.

"The — er — Elliots' — er — ?"

"No, sir." And Dobbins still gazed parkward.

"The O'Briens'?"

"Yes, sir," eagerly. "A yachting cruise —"

"That will do."

And Dobbins withdrew.

Reggie rose and paced the long room, head bent, hands clasped behind his back. So it had reached the point where he was blacklisted by all the decent people. He had sunk to the level of the O'Briens and the Carter-Smiths,— the O'Briens, butchers who had cornered beef a while ago, made a lot of money and "broken into society" the year before, and who were still in too unstable a position to ignore any one whose name bore even the dimmed glory of past prestige; the Carter-Smiths, plumbers not so long ago that it was forgotten by any one and least of all by themselves. The room seemed to stifle him and he got into his street clothes and motored to the club, leaving Dobbins anxious and

worried. Reggie was just recovering from a three days' spree and with that look on his face, Dobbins knew only too well that that night, or at least in a night or two, he could be found in one or another of the low dives he had taken to frequenting lately more and more often as his friends dropped away from him. He had already been asked to resign from one club and Dobbins knew through Willie's and Monty's man servant, that his resignation was being seriously considered by the only other club he had joined.

"Every one dead against him," thought Dobbins as he folded the hastily discarded morning suit. "Be good, and I'm your friend — be bad —" he threw out his hands with the gesture of one casting aside a useless article and cynically shrugged. "It is the way of the world, I suppose, and it is the best way, doubtless, but it doesn't seem right, somehow. Yet how can you help them? They are so damned repulsive when they are drunk. Forgive one of Reggie's three days' bats and you have forgiven seventy times seven, believe me."

Reggie hurried into the club to his mail rack, fearful of what he would and did find there. He took out the long heavy envelope of the club's private stationery and opened it with a certain *quiet despair*. He read the polite, delicately-worded

request for his resignation slowly, then slipped it back into the envelope. Aware that some one had come into the room, he turned, to find it was Willie and Monty.

He nodded and the two nodded back with a forced cordiality in their earnest attempts to pretend that they did not see the long white envelope, which only the governors of the club used.

"When a man is down and out, there isn't a friend to stand by him," said Reggie, too miserable to care what he said, knowing they had seen his disgrace.

Fat Monty flushed hotly and looked everywhere but at Reggie.

"There is always some one to drag him back of the ropes and sponge him off," said Willie in a kind attempt to be cheering. "A wife, or some one."

"A paid hireling," sneered Reggie, thrusting the note into his pocket. "Some one whose financial benefit it is to do so."

"Oh, I don't know," said Monty, feeling called on to say something and as usual not knowing what to say.

"If a man can't use the mitts, he has to take his medicine," consoled Willie. "No one can help him."

"They don't try to help," snapped Reggie.

"No one is allowed inside the ropes, you know."

"But there is no one to show him how outside of the ropes," declared Reggie. "Why don't they teach him between rounds?"

"I suppose they haven't any faith that he'll learn," faltered Monty, wishing he knew what to say and how to say it.

"Talk's no good," added Willie gloomily.

"How do you know it isn't?" demanded Reggie.

"Is it?" asked Willie. "Haven't we—er—don't people jaw and jaw even when they know it won't do any good?"

"That's it," complained Reggie. "They *know* before they begin that it won't do any good. They haven't any faith. They turn a fellow down for fear they will be made to suffer. Why don't they cling to him, hold on to him—"

"And go down with him?"

"Why not? Better to sink than to lose your faith."

"Faith in what?"

"In yourself, in the man, in the God in us," snapped Reggie, and turning abruptly, ashamed at his outbreak, he hurried from the room and the club, leaving the two gazing after him in mingled surprise, *horror* and embarrassment.

"Poor old chap," said Willie. "Was it—er—?"

Monty nodded sadly and echoed his chum, "Poor old chap."

It was growing late when Reggie emerged from the club and paused a moment on the steps to draw on his gloves. He was furious with himself, sick and disgusted with everything. The rush hour had commenced and he lingered a moment to watch the passing crowd, wondering what to do with himself. He didn't want to drink. He lost his wits too quickly lately under the influence of only a few glasses and he wanted to keep them clear for a while so he could think, muse angrily over his life, what he had made of it and how. He took a fierce comfort in his own misery, thoroughly enjoyed his own gloom. He stood a moment watching the crowd hurry by in their pitiful human struggle for what they themselves hardly knew and he scorned all of them — thin and fat, tall and short, poor, poorer, poorest.

"Hope wasn't shut up in Pandora's box," he mused. "It was simplicity. These damn fools don't know what they want. The majority of them have left the old farm, peace and plenty and the flowers they haven't the price of a sniff of now, for what? For the inane pleasure of struggling

back to the farm — that's the ambition of most, — a home and a bit of ground where one can grow flowers and raise hens and chickens. Most of them had it in the beginning and threw it away for the sake of wallowing in the mud and slime. I'm not sorry for a single one of them. They make me sick."

He ran down the steps, elbowed his way through the crowd to his waiting car and climbed in. He ordered his man to go to the Bronx and thence out into the country. The city felt stifling, oppressive, unbearable, like a close room, and he wanted air, the open country, peace, quiet and cleanliness. Some ten miles beyond the city limits, the chauffeur drew up before a favorite road house of Reggie's, but the silly affectation of rusticity sickened Reggie in his ugly mood. It was quite dark now and by the garish glow of the great arc lights over the entrance gate and porch, the place seemed neither city nor country, fish, flesh nor good red herring. The leaping fires, which had been lighted in the chill of the spring evening and glimpses of which could be caught through the diamond window-panes, were hospitable only to those who had the price. The rustic simplicity of the wistaria arbor fooled only the uninitiated. Mine host, big and fat, was *suavely jolly* to those who could pay for his good humor.

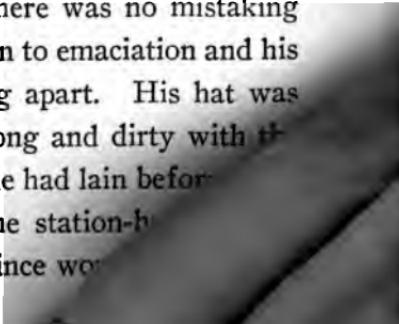
As the chauffeur slowed down and started to turn in between the great gate-posts, Reggie snapped at him to go on and he kept on in dull surprise.

It was late when Reggie ordered the man to return. He was hungry, nearly mad with his racing angry thoughts, and he wanted to end them some way, any way. Drink was the only method he knew and he decided to drink himself into oblivion, feeling a childish self-pity that there was no one who would care. It had begun to rain, but Reggie, crouched in the tonneau, his hat pulled over his eyes, was indifferent to it, and the chauffeur with one backward glance at his sullen master, made no suggestion to raise the cover. He simply put on a higher speed and the car leaped forward, into the wet darkness of the spring night, with only the lights on the car itself to guide them. It was pouring when they left the country behind and the car skidded on the first of the long stretch of paved streets. On familiar ground again, with the street lights to turn the night into day, the chauffeur again slipped a higher speed and raced the storm downtown, with one eye out for a policeman. He kept to the side streets until nearly at Forty-second, then he turned toward the distant lights of Broadway and ran into the arms of the law. Reggie glanced up for the first time from under the drip-

ping brim of his hat, decided that it wasn't worth while to offer the cop a tip to let them go and sank again into gloomy dejection as the car turned toward the police station.

The desk sergeant was an old friend, and as Reggie, having paid his fine, stood a moment chatting with him, the patrol clanged up outside, the door was pushed open and two policemen entered dragging a man between them. The fellow was hopelessly drunk, oblivious to everything, hanging limply from the officers' grasp. Reggie, standing aside to let them pass, glanced curiously at the poor wretch, then looked again sharply, while a dull flush crept into his white face. A feeling of nausea swept over him and it seemed to him he was once more looking at himself as he would be twenty years hence, old, penniless, forsaken, a worn-out cast-off hulk of humanity.

They got the fellow to a bench and Reggie walked over to him and gazed down on the thin purplish face of Timothy Payne. There was no mistaking him, though he had grown thin to emaciation and his shabby clothes seemed falling apart. His hat was off and his white hair was long and dirty with the slime of the streets in which he had lain before picked up and brought to the station-house. A new pair of stockings, long since worn out,



were hardly sufficient even with great care and thought to cover the naked feet through the gaps in the worthless shoes. The tight trousers could no longer be turned up at the hem and were frankly frayed, but the old bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat was still securely fastened with two clasp-pins and a button, the collar still turned up to hide the dearth of shirt beneath. The long thin hands were those of a gentleman, one who had known better things, and gazing down at the pitiful wreck of desire too strong for self-control, Reggie saw himself. A mist swam before his eyes and his throat tightened, while a wry smile twisted his lips as he remembered the papers he had whimsically locked away in his desk.

"Know him, gov'ner?" asked one of the policemen as he removed his hat and wiped his forehead. "We ropes him in almost every night now, poor devil."

Reggie turned to the sergeant. "I know this man, sergeant," said he. "He is a friend of mine. Can't I pay a fine or something and take him home?"

CHAPTER XII

TO THE WORLD'S END

REGGIE paced slowly up and down his sitting-room as he waited for his guest to appear before sitting down to breakfast. It was two days since, with the help of his chauffeur, he had dragged the old man up the long stairs of his home to his own rooms, while Dobbins gazed at them over the banisters, the bored disgust on his small pale face changing to frank and unflattering surprise as he realized that it was Reggie who was doing the dragging, not being dragged, Reggie at three in the morning sober and as steady on his feet as Dobbins himself. With his own hands, Reggie unfastened the two clasp-pins and the button and drew off the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat. They put Timothy into the great white bed, between the cool, fragrant linen sheets and left him there in the darkened room to sleep off his spree. Then Reggie got out of his damp clothes into dressing-gown and slippers with Dobbins' still wondering, half-dazed help, and ordered some supper. He was hungry and thirsty.

Dobbins hurried below in his nervousness to get the supper himself. He laid the little table drawn up at a cheerful but discreet distance from the fire, which he had made for the sake of the cheer it diffused rather than for its warmth, lighted the dainty candles, drew up a large easy chair, and then hesitated. He glanced at his master's back as Reggie leaned against the side of the open window gazing out over the darkened city, and with a hopeless shrug, mixed the cocktail Reggie always took now before meals.

It was a good cocktail, made with incomparable skill, by an adept in the art. As Reggie took the glass, the warm, sweetly sickening fumes rose to his face and he held it a moment, flushing. He felt again the weight of the old man leaning so heavily against him in the tonneau, he smelt again the foul breath coming in snorting puffs between the open, loosely hanging lips, he saw again the miserable, dirty, drunken sot, himself as he would be in twenty years, and once more a physical nausea swept over him. Drunkenness in all its loathsome details was no new sight to Reggie, but somehow he could not overlook the similarity between himself and Timothy, could not free himself from the nonsensical belief that Timothy was himself and he was sick with self-loathing. His soul seemed to have sunk

to the lowest depths of depravity while reason stood aloft and watched it. Indifferent to the fact that Dobbins was surreptitiously watching him, he turned to the window and with a grim smile, emptied the contents of the glass out into the night.

Reggie had put Timothy in a suit of his own silk pajamas and had ordered Dobbins to burn the old man's clothes. The next day while Timothy still slept, he went out and bought clothes that were befitting for his "father." The suit alone was a disappointment. It was modish and very expensive, but it was necessarily not made to order and the idea of wearing a ready-made suit was painful to Reggie. This could soon be rectified, he comforted himself. And as he chose this and that, the affection he had for Timothy grew in his heart and it seemed to him he was shopping for one nearer and dearer than merely by adoption.

Monty and Willie came upon him as he was looking over some suits in an exclusive haberdasher's on Fifth Avenue. The two were visibly surprised. The expression on Reggie's face as he had left them the evening before, had foretold a bat of considerable length, but here he was buying ready-to-wear suits. They wondered if he were going into "slumming;" why else would any one buy suits not made to order by a highly priced tailor?

"Hullo," said Willie.

"Hullo," said Monty.

"Howdy-do," said Reggie, nodding carelessly and turning at once to look at another suit brought to his attention by an obsequious clerk.

"Er — er — slumming?" questioned Willie amiably.

"No," said Reggie. "Shopping — for my family."

"Drunk," decided Monty, drawing Willie from the place. "Drunk, by jove, and he doesn't know it."

"He always could carry a lot and not show it," agreed Willie. "Poor old chap."

And as usual Monty echoed his chum. "Poor old chap."

And now, pacing his sitting-room, Reggie waited for the old man with some trepidation, for he had not seen Timothy since the night he had dragged him up-stairs and tucked him into bed. He knew the old man's pride and feared for the result of his shopping expedition.

The morning was warm and clear. The flower boxes in the open windows were a riotous mass of color between the hanging curtains. A table was drawn up where one seated at it could gaze out over the park beyond the farther roofs to the distant

Hudson. It was laid for two and in the middle was a great bowl of daffodils. Reggie seldom breakfasted before twelve, but it was nearer one when the door opened and turning he saw Timothy pausing on the threshold.

For the first time in his life Reggie saw his friend decently dressed, clean-shaved, refreshed, and the sight was such a relief it was almost a shock. Timothy was a gentleman and he showed it from his white head to his slim feet, clad now in silk socks and low shoes that were large enough to be comfortable for his feet sore and over-grown from endless walking. The ready-to-wear suit, cleverly altered here and there by Dobbins, was hardly to be taken for what it was, Reggie admitted to himself. It was a light gray and fitted as well as Reggie's own. There was a pearl stick-pin in the gray silk tie and a bunch of early violets in the buttonhole of the coat, worn with the same jaunty indifference as the old bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat had been worn. Dobbins hovered in the hall, proud of his handiwork.

Reggie came forward and they shook hands gaily, catching each other's glances with the old-time delight of friends meeting after a long separation. Reggie's asked for forgiveness at the liberties he had taken, and Timothy's granted it, with

the whimsical indifference of his nature. They wished each other good morning and made courteous inquiries for each other's health, then Reggie rang for breakfast and they sat down at the table. The circumstances were unusual for both, but not so much so for Reggie, used to company at all times and of all kinds, as to Timothy, who had fallen asleep in a gutter and had wakened in a great canopied bed, in a high-ceilinged, richly-paneled room. They discussed the weather, politics, the cruise they had taken in the fall, avoiding the present situation with deliberate intention. Timothy talked well, with a broadness and an insight into life that Reggie admired intensely but could not begin to equal. He found himself following in the old man's mental footsteps with the same willingness and alacrity he had shown on the yacht when they two had been alone and at peace for three long months.

Breakfast over, Reggie went to his desk and returned to the table with the papers of adoption Patrick O'Brady had sent him. He laid them before Timothy without a word. Timothy read them slowly, then looked up with a chuckle, his old face slightly flushed.

"You see," said Reggie brightly, plunging into the subject from sheer nervousness, "you are

my father now. We have got to live together, Tim."

Timothy laughed and pushed the papers aside. "O'Brady wanted to feel entitled to that check," said he, reaching for and lighting a cigar. "He must have made his fortune with it, for he has left his old quarters and has moved up-town somewhere."

"He did me a good service," said Reggie. "I'll look him up and do him one in return."

Timothy nodded, amused, knocked the ashes from the end of his cigar into his empty coffee cup and rising, walked to the window and stood looking out, humming a little tune. It was spring, warm and fragrant, even in the gaunt unloveliness of the city streets. He was well-fed, rested, with new clothes which it would be impossible to return as his had been burned beyond recovery. Well, he couldn't help himself, so he would accept cheerfully what fate sent, chat a while with the lad he had grown fond of and then would leave. In his new clothes, expensive, well-fitting, well-brushed, with silk socks and immaculate linen, he stood a good chance of getting a decent position at last with a salary big enough to enable him to send Annie and the baby to the country and get Madame Russell into better rooms. The sun bathed him

like the tender caress of a woman's eyes. The scent from the window boxes stole past him like the breath from a country garden. It seemed to him he could hear the droning hum of bees and the clucking of a hen with a brood of chicks, scratching up the garden path. The sky was as blue as a baby's eyes and across the street the park trees were softly, freshly green. Timothy smiled contentedly and pulled at his cigar with the unquestioning philosophy of the old who have suffered much and are thankful for whatever back-water of life that will sweep them for a breathing spell into some quiet cove. He thought idly of the adoption papers, and turned to Reggie, with a deep chuckle.

"I shall make my will to-day, son," said he, "and name you my only heir, leave to you all I possess." He made an ironical gesture to include his clothes and nothing else.

"You will possess more than that before you die," declared Reggie, coming over to him by the open window. "You and I share and share alike now, Tim. We are relatives."

"Relations never yet shared anything alike, son," smiled Timothy, "except mutual dislike."

"We will," declared Reggie.

"All mine is yours," said Timothy, "and that is just exactly nothing."

"And all mine is yours."

Timothy laughed good-naturedly and bent to smell the flowers in the boxes.

"I mean it, Tim," said Reggie earnestly. "You're not going back to that," waving his hand in the direction of the lower East Side. "You are going to stay here with me, now that I have found you."

"That is kind in you, Van, but it can't be done. I haven't a cent and two people can't live together as equals when one is rich and the other is poor. When you haven't any money, you are wretched and when you have it, you think you are wretched, and so the balance swings even."

"Now, Tim, you pig-headed ass, listen to me. I have—"

"And I haven't," said Timothy.

"But you will have when I give you some of mine."

"Charity—"

"No, certainly not. Sagacity, wisdom, logic. It is any thing but charity. Don't you see I have more than I want, more than is good for me? If you took some, it would all come back to me when you died, Tim."

"You might die first."

"Then I wouldn't need it."

"I might disapprove of your way of living and cut you off without a cent."

"It would be better for me if you did."

"You would break the will."

"I would not, I swear it. What's yours, will be yours. Understand. You can do as you please with it, Tim. Leave it all to the W. C. T. U., if you want to."

Timothy laughed and shrugged the subject aside as the wild Utopian dreams of an impulsive youth, but Reggie was not to be so put off. His face was flushed with earnestness and his eyes pleaded more eloquently than his tongue.

"It's fate, don't you see, Tim? Think how we met that first time. What we did then, when we were out of our wits, is the wisest thing we have ever done, or ever will do."

"The wisdom of fools, Van."

"Then don't let it surpass that of wise men. Live up to the sense you found in a glass of booze."

"The W. C. T. U. wouldn't approve of that," declared Timothy with flippant severity.

"Tim, don't fool. I am in earnest. Can't you see I mean it?"

"Yes, I see, Van. But I see too that it can't be done. I've been low, but I haven't sold myself, body and soul."

"Oh, Tim, great Scott! You won't sell yourself. If I gave a kid a nickel, that wouldn't mean that I had bought him."

"I know, but this is different. I am no kid — though God knows I've been goat enough."

"We ought to be simple like little children," declared Reggie. "'Except ye become as little children —'"

"'When I became a man, I put away childish things,'" quoted Timothy.

"You said once that money made the modern complexity of life," said Reggie, beginning on another tack. "It isn't the money, it's people's attitude toward money. You let things of gold — soulless, inanimate, changeable — stand between you and your friend. It is not the money's fault. Put the blame where it ought to go."

"Money guarantees a man's dependence or independence. The only inferiority or superiority nowadays, is financial. Any man hates to admit that he is dependent on or inferior to his neighbor. That's where the money complexity comes in, Van."

"But it's not as if you were dependent or needed *help, Tim, or as if you had come to me —*"

"You pulled me out of the gutter."

"I've been there myself, often."

"With your money you can enjoy the gutter as choice, not necessity. When you have nothing but the gutter, it becomes degrading and monotonous."

"Then leave it," commended Reggie.

"Too old," said Timothy, and his face darkened as he turned his eyes again out of the window, over the fairy green of the trees in the park.

"Not to me, Tim."

"It can't be done, Van. Look at it right, boy. There is, first and of most importance, your mother."

"I love my mother, but we have nothing to do with each other. She has her friends and does as she likes, I have mine and do as I like."

"Nevertheless, she would object."

"She objects to everything I do on principle. She doesn't really care. She has an idea of what a mother should say on certain occasions, and when she has said it, she doesn't bother or worry any more. We have never been close together, my mother and I. I don't know which of us is to blame. I just know it is a fact. If I were a poodle dog, she would enjoy having me around more. I wouldn't give her age away."

"But for all that, you are mother and son. You live together."

"Not so you would notice it. When she is home, I am generally away. We haven't met each other consecutively seven days for over three years. She likes to travel—"

"But this is her home—"

"I own the house. She can always come here if she wants to. She owns a few houses herself in this town, and she has always said that if I marry, she is going to move into one of them. A dowager, she says, is more in the way than the ten commandments when one wants to have a good time."

"Then there is another objection. When you marry—"

"You will have your own money. You can leave me if you want to, or stay with me as I want you to, always. Don't you see?"

"But I can't take your money — except possibly as a paid companion."

"Paid companion be hanged! Stay with me because we are friends."

"When these clothes wear out—"

"I shall get you some more."

"I would be lower than a poor relative, then,

Van. Can't you see? A child would feel like a mature man compared to what I would feel."

" You won't stay with me, then?"

" I can't. It would spoil whatever friendship there is between us."

" You're so damn mercenary. If you could forget money for about five minutes, you wouldn't think so."

" You don't understand —"

" Do you understand? How do you know it would spoil everything? Have you ever tried it before?"

" No. But I know poverty. Poverty and wealth are unequal and hence can't mix as equals."

" You're not poverty. I'm not wealth. The terms are abstract, entirely outside of us. You and I, two men, men, understand flesh and blood temptations, we are equal and can meet as equals."

" You don't know. You have never tried it."

" Neither have you."

" I have. I lived once, six accursed months, with a wealthy relative. The position of front door-mat was dignified to that which I was made to feel I had."

" Hang relatives! We aren't relatives, Tim. We are friends."

"And I want to remain so."

"Well, why can't we even if we do live together? We — love each other." Reggie flushed bashfully, and smiled with sudden boyish feeling and sincerity.

"Love wears thin."

"Not the right kind."

"How do you know ours is the right kind?"

"Because I know it, and you would too, if you had any faith."

"Faith in what?"

"In me, in you, in the God in us."

Reggie stopped abruptly and walked the length of the room. Timothy flushed deeply at the younger man's emotion, and looked away to hide his own. At the end of the room, Reggie turned and thrust his hands in his pockets.

"Then you won't do it?" he asked.

"I can't," said Timothy, with a supplication for pardon and understanding in his old eyes.

"All right, then leave me." Reggie's voice rasped hoarsely, like a rusty hinge. "Leave me alone in my need, and when you get to hell, you will find me sweating there."

The feeling so frankly uncontrollable in Reggie's voice belied Timothy's first belief that this was *another move to win his consent to being taken care*

of in his old age. Wisdom also pointed out that if it were all only a kindly ruse on Reggie's part to help a friend, and he were not thinking of himself at all and his need and desire for the old man's companionship, he would have probably brought forward at the beginning that it was really a favor to himself. The very clumsiness in his argument had proved its sincerity. And still Timothy hesitated.

"You do not need me," he protested gently and diffidently.

"If a man ever needed his God, a child his mother, I need you, Tim."

"I'm — I'm hopeless," stammered Timothy, touched more than he cared to show.

"And so will I be, if you leave me. I'm all alone. For God's sake, don't go back on me, too."

Reggie threw out his hands with a pleading gesture, his head was up, his face was white and tense and haggard. The ravages of dissipation were stamped deeply on it like the ugly scars of a ruined country in the path of a cyclone. Timothy knew them well. He recalled his own struggles and his miserable hopelessness when all the friends he had known had drawn back from the fight as being useless and left him to sink or swim alone. They had been so sure they could do nothing. They

had had such little faith. Faith in what? In him, in themselves, in God in all. Then he thought of Annie and the baby covered with scrofula and born old, of Mrs. Russell, with her worn nerves and stomach ruined by poverty, and of Miss Fisher, deaf and forlorn and jobless. After all he would consider himself merely a highly paid companion, and with his salary he could help the three women. He could engage Miss Fisher as his secretary — good heavens, no. The woman had worked enough. What she wanted was a rest, mentally and physically. He would get a small farm in the country and give all three a taste of peace if it were in his power.

He flicked the ashes from the tip of his cigar and turned gaily to Reggie. "Shall I ring for the motor? Ready-made clothes are all right in their way, but I would like to be measured for a few suits that are suits."

And Reggie laughed with a catch in his throat.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CLIMB UP

REGGIE'S "father" did not make his formal bow to Reggie's friends for at least two years. Both the old man and the young were nervous and run down, both wanted to forget the past as much as possible in new scenes, among strange people. Reggie had lost his grip and Timothy recommended the country as a restorative. So, they went to Canada in the northern woods for a summer's fishing, crossed the continent to Vancouver and sailed for the Orient the following fall. Their financial arrangements were soon completed. Reggie wanted to give Timothy a certain amount outright, but Timothy insisted that it be made into a trust fund that was to return to Reggie on his death. The income was to be Timothy's, and it was large enough to allow him to live as an equal with those in Reggie's class, and yet to have some to invest as he wished, which investments were to be his, and with which he hoped to become independent and repay Reggie for what he called his advance.

"Money and trouble and rabbits are alike," he

explained to Reggie. "Enough of each breeds and rebreeds so fast you can't follow the generations."

A few days before they left the city for Canada, Timothy disappeared. All day Reggie waited and watched for him in an anxiety that grew hourly. The old man had murmured something unintelligible about not being back for lunch and something vague about the country. He had refused to look at Reggie as the younger man had affectionately helped him on with his light spring overcoat and adjusted the buttonhole bouquet with the solicitude of a mother getting her child ready for school.

"Don't you get into mischief," warned Reggie, with a solemn shake of the head.

"No, indeed," declared Timothy. "A —er — a little business. Back as soon as possible."

Reggie spent the day looking over his fishing rods and making the last arrangements for the coming trip. He lunched alone, refusing the cocktail Dobbins brought him as he had done since Timothy came for the old man's sake. But at three, Timothy had not returned and Reggie's anxiety began to grow. Where had Timothy gone? What was he up to? Was he drunk somewhere? The thought filled him with alarm and he strove to put it aside but could not. Suppose the old man was drunk, where could they find him? Since they had taken

up life together, Timothy had been uproariously drunk more than once, sometimes alone, sometimes with Reggie. But the young man had always recovered first, and the sight of the unconscious, bloated, drunken old man had always sickened him, filling him with a tender pity he had never felt before for any one, the unconscious pity with which most of us regard and excuse our own sins. If Timothy was drunk now, he was probably among strangers, alone and unprotected. To worry was absurd, foolish. Timothy had taken care of himself for years. So Reggie told himself, but the telling did no good. His anxiety and pitying shame for the old man increased every moment. He dared not leave the house, unless Timothy telephone him to come to his assistance. So he paced the length of the drawing-room to be as near the front door as possible and waited and waited, listened and listened. Dobbins, passing the door, glanced in.

"Worrying about the old one," he chuckled. "There's nothing like a bad example to keep a man straight."

He mixed a whisky and soda and took it to Reggie with the laudable desire to quiet the youth's nerves. Reggie, standing by the window, gazing up the street for a glimpse of the slim jaunty figure in its light spring suit and gay boutonnière, did not

hear Dobbins enter the room and approach him. The man coughed discreetly.

Reggie turned and glanced impatiently from the man to the whisky and soda on the silver tray. He frowned angrily, too worried and upset to be bothered with anything.

"Take it away," he thundered, and Dobbins immediately withdrew.

It was six before Timothy returned, gay, tired and sober. Reggie met him at the door and pulled him in with a sudden overpowering joy and relief to find him as steady on his legs as himself.

"Tim, you rascal," he laughed huskily. "What have you been up to?"

"I've been buying a farm," said Timothy happily, intent on his purchase.

"Buying a farm? Great guns, Tim, I have several. I could have given you one. What did you buy one for? Not planning to live the simple life, are you?"

"No life is simple," said Timothy. "Except possibly, a cow's."

Reggie laughed, saw Timothy didn't want to say any more about the farm and changed the subject, amused at the old man's whim.

"The next time you go to buy a farm, take me along. I have worried damnably about you, Tim."

"Don't worry," advised Timothy. "It doesn't pay."

"It is almighty good for developing one's understanding and sympathy, though," declared Reggie, feeling a vague fellowship with Dobbins.

The next morning Timothy called on Mrs. Russell. He went alone in the limousine, a well-groomed, well-dressed person, to whom the policemen at the crossings deferentially touched their caps and failed to recognize as the picturesque old figure of the lower East Side, known in every police station as "his grace, me lud duke."

As spring had advanced, Timothy had stayed away from his three friends for longer and longer intervals, as he had never had anything toward the end, to give them, and did not care to have them see him when he was drunk. It was three weeks now since he had seen them last and Mrs. Russell was expecting him. She opened the door in answer to his knock and stared, frankly curious and pleased at his changed appearance. She decided some relative had died and left him money. Timothy, like Miss Fisher, had always been different from the others who frequented 178 Second Avenue, and though he had never mentioned his relatives, Mrs. Russell always took it for granted that he had wealthy ones.

She had just finished her washing. A line was stretched from the foot of the bed to the bureau. Two cheap, much darned shirt-waists hung from it in gaunt unloveliness, besides several stockings with holes in them and a limp white collar. A few handkerchiefs were pasted flat on the glass of the open windows. The morning was oppressively warm and the room at the top of the house was close and dreary. In the open window, with Annie's thin unhappy youngster asleep on her lap, sat Miss Fisher, out of a job as usual, Timothy surmised, glancing at her white tired face as she gazed with listless eyes across the opposite roofs. Annie was scrubbing floors in a large office building, he learned.

"What I ought to be doing," declared Miss Fisher bitterly. "You don't need hearing to do that."

Timothy looked at her delicate figure, at her pinched and gentle face so clearly stamped with caste, at her thin hands — those of a lady — and realized the horror and loathing she would feel at doing the work Annie took for granted and rather favored, if one must work.

"Not at all," said he. "You couldn't scrub floors any more than Annie could write an intelligent letter. You are for better things."

"Not when you're deaf," said the girl.

"Don't mind your deafness," urged Timothy.
"Tell people to speak up."

"I know," she returned listlessly, "but people get tired of speaking up. When I keep saying What? — I have to — they get mad at me."

"I try to tell her not to mind," said Madame Russell from the bed where she sat, frankly indifferent to the washing. When one has faced destitution, the minor conventionalities lose their weight. A spade is a spade, an undershirt, an undershirt.

Miss Fisher shrugged wearily, her tired eyes filling with tears. "I know you tell me not to mind, but how can I help it? How could any one? You don't know what it is like, for you are not deaf. It makes me nervous. I can't help it, and the more nervous I get, the deafer I become."

"I declare it is too bad," declared Madame Russell, nodding at Timothy. "She is a good girl and a capable one."

Miss Fisher laughed shakily and held up the baby to change the subject, shrinking from hearing her own infirmities discussed, no matter how gently it were done, or with what sympathy. "Don't you think she has grown, Timothy?"

Timothy admired the baby, giving it his finger to hold as he wondered how to lead up to the subject

of his visit now that he was face to face with the two women. He knew Mrs. Russell would accept his offer in the same spirit in which it was made, frankly and thankfully. Annie too would accept, as frankly, though probably not so gratefully. Timothy had learned that gratitude is rare in people like Annie. The more one does for them, the more they demand as their right and the less grateful they become. But Mary Fisher was different from either. She was hopelessly out of her element and class down there in the slums of New York, with only the simple Annie and the kind-hearted, but nevertheless commonplace Mrs. Russell for friends. Timothy knew from experience that there is no misery so bitter as being forced to live out of one's class. He knew how his offer would hurt her, how the acceptance of it would seem to her the final downward step in her poverty, and that she would only consent because of her deafness and growing incapacity. He strove to think how he could mention the farm so as not to hurt her pride or let her suffer more than was necessary. Mrs. Russell opened the way with the frankness of an old friend.

“Has your ship come in, Timothy, that you look so fine?”

Timothy was still standing, the only other chair

in the room beside the rocker, was doing duty, like Patrick O'Brady's, as a clothes-horse for some nameless garments that Madame Russell had been unable to put on the line. They recalled to Timothy the days before he had discarded underclothes as a luxury, when he too had stayed at home to wash the one pair he had been reduced to, and he appeared now tactfully oblivious to their presence.

"Not a ship," said he. "A fleet."

"Relative die?" asked Mrs. Russell, her red hands wrapped in her soiled apron.

"No," said Timothy, "business." He laid his hat and stick on the bureau and began to draw off his gloves. "I got hold of a good thing by chance. I held on, and now—" He threw out his hand with a gay little gesture and glanced from Mrs. Russell to Miss Fisher.

Mrs. Russell stared, frankly incredulous.

"Don't be so unflatteringly surprised," laughed Timothy. "I didn't pawn my brains, dear lady, with all my other pawnable possessions."

Mrs. Russell sneered. "Brains don't count nowadays without something to back them, money or politics."

"Call it brains, luck, chance, anything, it doesn't matter," said Timothy, leaning against the bureau. "I have money now, plenty of it, and a farm."

"Back to the farm," sneered Mrs. Russell again, her weary old mouth drooping at the corners where she had no teeth. "It sounds good but you can't get back to the farm without money."

"I have money," insisted Timothy. "And a farm, as I said. I want some one to live on it, to keep it up—" he paused nervously, glanced at Miss Fisher, saw the indifferent amusement in her eyes as one listening to a pleasant story that did not affect her, turned to Mrs. Russell, noted the eager dawning of hope in her faded eyes and threw aside all pretense, speaking directly to her. "I want you to go and live there and be at peace, you and Annie and Miss Fisher. Why not? I have no use for the place. I have more money than I want, than I can possibly use. It is a pretty place, just over the line in Connecticut, about two hours' ride from New York. You ought to be happy there. You can have a cow—"

Mrs. Russell was crying, her gray head bent forward on her red parboiled hands, clinging to the foot of the bed. Timothy stopped, dismayed. Then he went to her and laid a hand gently on her shoulder.

"Don't do that," he pleaded, "please don't do that. I beg your pardon. I did not mean to hurt you. I did not intend to, believe me."

Mrs. Russell raised her head, looking at him with tear-wet eyes. "Oh, Tim, you old fool," said she. And Timothy chuckled with relief.

"It will be the very thing for Annie," said he. "She will be outdoors all day."

Mrs. Russell nodded. Timothy glanced at Mary Fisher. She had cuddled the baby in her arms and was rocking it gently, her eyes gazing out of the window, her pinched face suddenly white. She was looking into the past and the still more miserable present and future. All her chances of marrying and living a woman's normal life seemed gone. Compelled to work beyond her strength, she had had no time to think of marriage, no money to spend on clothes to make herself attractive. As her deafness and poverty increased, she had been forced to take humbler and humbler positions, to find lodgings in lower and cheaper neighborhoods, until the only men she met were so far below her, she never dreamed of looking on any of them as possible husbands. The very idea would have been revolting. She was thirty-eight, thin, unattractive, unintentionally austere, deaf, and save for a ten-dollar bill, quite penniless, owing three weeks' rent, and with small prospect of getting a job even as waitress. Patrons were apt to get impatient and leave if forced to repeat their orders over and over

so the whole restaurant could hear. She shifted the tiny head on her shoulder, glanced at the face of the baby born old, and then turned again to the window. And now at the end of her resources this man, practically a stranger, came to offer her a home—charity. She, a Fisher! If she didn't accept, what could she do? What else was left but his charity or that of the public?

"Women can make a farm a paying proposition," she heard Timothy explaining to Madame Russell, in a voice unnecessarily loud for her benefit. "All they need is a little help at the start. They can raise turkeys and chickens. There are never enough turkeys at Thanksgiving time. You always read of a shortage."

"I know," agreed Mrs. Russell, hysterically happy. "With a cow, our living expenses will be practically nothing."

Timothy nodded, sitting on the bed beside Mrs. Russell, and still addressing her exclusively, not even glancing at the tired woman in the window. "Of course, I would like to keep the farm, but if you wanted to buy it on the instalment plan, I would be willing to sell it to you. You and Mary can run the place while Annie gets well. She mustn't do a thing, but rest and stay out of doors, and you two will have your hands full, with her and the baby."

"It will be the making of her," declared Mrs. Russell.

"It will, and of all of you. You are worn out. You all ought to be in sanatoriums."

"That's the trouble with poverty," sighed Mrs. Russell. "You can stand it mentally, probably, but you can't stand it physically. Sooner or later, your body's bound to go back on you."

"The body's not cast iron," agreed Timothy. "Why, look at me! I was offered help. I took it and now see how I am dressed. Out in front is my own car and a chauffeur. It's no disgrace—"

The woman in the window rose, the baby hugged tightly to her gaunt breast. Her head was up, her thin cheeks were suddenly crimson, while her firm mouth twitched slightly at the corners.

"You have sugared the pill enough," said she with a catch in her voice, her eyes dwelling tenderly on Timothy's old face. "I will swallow it for I feel I must, and thank you kindly."

She dropped him a bit of a curtsy in gentle raillery and sank again into the chair, hopeless, beaten.

"You can raise turkeys," said Timothy earnestly, trying to make her surrender merely an armistice.

She nodded bravely. "Yes," said she merrily. "I will raise turkeys and — the baby."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PITYING HEART

TIMOTHY reined in his horse and listened.

Far across a neighboring hill, behind a grove of trees, he heard the long drawn, deep bell notes of the hounds echoing clearly in the cool autumn air. He glanced over his shoulder just in time to catch a glimpse of a small, brown, frightened body scudding into some underbrush on the crest of the hill. Again came the deep bay of the dogs and far away, through the trees, a horse and a bright red coat disappeared as soon as they were seen. Timothy had left the hunt early that morning. He had never been to one before and somehow the sight he had caught of the little trembling fox, pursued by a pack of hounds and a score of men and women on horseback had filled him with disgust at the ridiculous injustice of calling the thing a "hunt." It could not be dignified by the name of sport, it was so manifestly unfair. He remembered when as a lad he and his dog had gone fox hunting over the snow-covered hills of the Northland. That had been hunting. The fox had stood more chance to get away than to get shot. It had needed all the

lad's sagacity and endurance to outwit the beast. But this was merely childish. It reminded him of a dozen boys, a terrier, and a frightened cornered rat. So, he had drawn up his horse and watched the hunt sweep by, and now he was alone, on a narrow country road, with absolutely no idea where he was except that he was somewhere on Long Island.

On the side of the road opposite the hills and pastures through which the hunt would presently come tearing along, was a high close hedge of evergreen with a small postern gate. Across the hedge from the back of his horse, Timothy could see lawns, flower-beds and tiny winding paths, disappearing among a grove of trees and shrubbery. It was November. The day was clear and cold with a sky of deep blue. The fields and bushes were brown and the trees raised leafless boughs against the sky.

Timothy's eyes were bright with health and a mind at peace, his skin was fresh and ruddy. He carried himself with old-time jauntiness in the bright red hunting-coat and the latest thing in riding-breeches. He looked ten years younger instead of two years older. He drank less now, for his starved body had needed and craved stimulants, but he was well-fed, warm and happy and needed nothing to keep up his nerve. He and Reggie had re-

turned early in October and had settled down at home for the winter. Reggie's "father" was hailed with joy — and doubt — by Reggie's friends. Willie and Monty roared in joy over the joke and gleefully seconded the old man's nomination to the one club to which Reggie still belonged, as the governors had decided to wait until he returned before taking action on the resignation they had requested and which he had promptly sent in. They liked Reggie and if he had pulled up during his two years' absence, they wished to give him another chance. The Elliots, Farnums, Abbingtons, were dubious when they heard of Timothy. Might it not be Reggie's last drunken stand before he disappeared from decent society? Helen was grieved and hopeless. She remembered the old man on the yacht and, sure that Reggie's end was at hand, felt justified in the stand she had taken. When men realized that women would no longer put up with their drinking, they would not drink. It was merely a habit in the sex, engendered by centuries of women's foolish toleration and humble endurance. Reggie might drink himself into his coffin, but the next generation would see and understand what women had endured, what they refused to endure longer, and would be the better for some women's denial of home and children. This was

true, all true, but she thought of the young lad she had danced with in the dancing-school days and her heart wished dumbly sometimes that her head was not so strong, so clearly logical.

Reggie's mother received the news that he had living with him an old man picked up from the East Side in a drunken spree, with a certain amount of enjoyment. She was bored with the men she knew, and a man from the East Side, horribly poor and quite common, must be delightfully original. She never thought that Reggie had sense enough to do anything so entertaining. But when further rumors reached her of the old man's ranking in the household as "father," she grew annoyed and angry. She had just bought a small place on Long Island which she called her old-age retreat and was busy getting it in order when she heard the first definite news about "father." She telephoned Reggie at once that she was coming to town for the day, and to meet her at Sherry's for luncheon, alone.

"Kindly leave 'father' at home," said she.

Reggie chuckled at the scorn in her voice as he hung up the receiver and went forth to meet his parent.

"Let me bring him to call, mother," pleaded Reggie as the luncheon was drawing to a close with rather tense feeling on both sides of the small table.

"He is a gentleman, far more so than I am, more than my real father was."

"Reggie!"

"It is so, mother. Father had money, but, except among the parvenu you know perfectly well that doesn't make a gentleman."

"Reggie, how can you talk so about your own father?"

"It's a stupid child nowadays, mother, that doesn't know his own father," reminded Reggie.

"And a foolish woman that knows her own husband," said his mother with a nod of her small head in the jaunty little hat, cocked up on one side, so charmingly rakish. "Women and potatoes should have no eyes. Your father was as you should not have said, Reggie."

She was always ready to admit the justice in her opponent's remarks with a disconcerting girlish frankness that left one a bit nonplused, but eager to grant her the same courtesy, in return.

Reggie nodded contritely. "I know I shouldn't have said it. I think this gentleman-talk is a bit overdone, anyway, don't you, mother? You can be a man if you aren't a gentleman."

"Personally," agreed his mother, with a charming smile, "I would not care to be a gentleman — I much prefer to be a lady."

The long room was practically empty, for mother and son had lunched late with the purpose of avoiding any one they might know. The day was exceptionally warm for October and Mrs. Boggs wore a soft silk dress of lavender embroidered with violets and tiny pink field-daisies, a combination of her own that pleased her as being distinctly original. Her hat was small, of the same color as her dress, and trimmed with the same flowers.

"The Lord combines them, so why shouldn't I?" she had asked of Reggie as he kissed her on meeting.

"The Lord doesn't though," Reggie had laughed. "Violets, not forced, but growing as the Lord intended, are spring flowers, come and gone before the field-daisies bloom, especially those little pink ones."

"Then I am more original than I thought," declared his mother.

She was nibbling an ice now, slowly, her delicate brows drawn together in dangerous disregard for the wrinkles she was keeping so bravely at bay. The Hughes, lunching with some friends at a distant table, paused on their way out to exchange a few remarks about the summer, mutual friends and health.

"Silly things," said Mrs. Boggs as they passed

on with a final series of nods. "The majority of people are stupid, Reggie. We know too many."

"You seem out of sorts," said Reggie kindly.
"Aren't feeling very fit, are you?"

"No, I'm not. I'm cross, Reggie, and tired of everything. I don't know what's the matter with me."

"You are lonely in that foolish place you have bought down on Long Island. You ought to come up to the city."

"That is my rock in the time of storm," said she, with an emphatic nod. "I relax there, become just as old as I please. I am not at home to any one unless they have an appointment from me. Besides, how could I come to the city with 'father'?"

Reggie flushed. "Mother," he protested. "That's absurd. He isn't known as my father, save to a foolish few like that ass Willie Collins. He is simply a friend of mine, a very dear friend. He isn't poor. He has plenty of money. I call him Tim, and he calls me Van. That father story is simply silly gossip. We don't pay any attention to it."

"You took him on board the yacht as your father."

"I was drunk, mother."

"So was he."

"Yes, we both were or it wouldn't have happened."

"Then, don't you see, if he drinks, he is not the sort of companion you should have, Reggie."

Reggie raised his hand, and his face whitened.
"My dear mother, please. That subject is foolish
and quite hopeless, believe me. I have been left
to do as I please by —"

"Not by me, Reggie."

"By every one, mother."

Again Mrs. Boggs agreed with her usual disconcerting suddenness. "Yes, my love. A family, like the government, can only exist happily when each member in it shows a decent restraint and a certain amount of thought for the others. You showed none for me. You are quite disgusting when you are drunk, Reggie, believe me. You wanted me to live with you and show complete self-control, while you exhibited none. It was radically unfair. Justice, my boy, justice."

"You look thirty, mother," declared Reggie, always amused rather than impressed by his mother's remarks.

Mrs. Boggs sighed and pushed back her plate. "I don't feel it," said she. "I feel eighty, if I do a day. Isn't life silly, Reggie? Why should we

be ashamed to grow old? Years should bring honors."

"They do," said Reggie and stopped abruptly.

"To some," agreed his mother. "Say it, if you like. It is so. I have had too much money. I have missed life, heigh-ho!"

"I shouldn't think you had missed it."

"Piffle! The way I have lived is no more life than the flowers on my hat are flowers. One is as artificial as the other. I know, for I am growing wise—and old."

"If you want the house, mother, Tim and I can go to the club—"

"Let Tim go to the club."

"If he goes, I go, mother."

"Reggie, you are infuriating. I never presented you with any embarrassing relatives."

Reggie laughed and patted her hand. "Neither have I, you, mother. That is only silly gossip."

"They say—"

"They say 'is gossip."

"Then you will not give him up?"

"It is absurd to ask it, mother."

"I am very much displeased with you, Reggie."

She gathered up her gloves, and Reggie drew back her chair.

"You always have been, mother," said he, as

he picked up her parasol and followed her to the door.

So the two men had settled down contentedly for the winter. Timothy was interested in making enough money to become independent. Money makes money, and with Reggie's name and financial influence back of him, he felt that it was highly probable he would be able to repay every cent. He had at least ten good years before him still, maybe more. So he took an office on Wall Street and furnished it with great pleasure and Reggie's amused help. As Timothy's enthusiasm mounted, Reggie's interest in his own concerns grew and he began to take over into his own hands more and more of his affairs, left heretofore to lawyers. Every day the two lunched together, for Reggie had a father's solicitude about the old man and worried what he was up to when out of sight. Timothy was a general favorite with his new associates in the business world, and Reggie worried constantly lest in a jovial crowd the old man take the drop that always proved too much. Reggie was proud of Timothy and fretted and grew nervous when some one suggested a glass of something somewhere. Lest Timothy get drunk, Reggie would hardly take more than a glass and would then drag the old man, protesting, away on the excuse of business.

Society was inclined to wait with folded hands and see what further escapades Reggie was up to before they cast him forth for good. For two years they had heard absolutely nothing of him, had not the slightest idea where he was. Now that he had returned he looked like the old Reggie again whom they had known before his days of dissipation, morally clean and physically healthy. And yet there was "father," and people recalled the vague story of two years before in which "father" and a yachting cruise figured largely and which had even reached the papers as most of Reggie's escapades did. Nevertheless old friends decided to wait and see what happened. But Reggie, interested to the exclusion of all else in Timothy and his steadily widening business affairs, was frankly indifferent as to whether he was taken back into the good graces of those who had formerly turned from him. The aimless round of teas, dinners and receptions seemed silly to him, now, as empty and foolish as Helen had always claimed them to be. Both he and Timothy were fond of riding, and they decided that Timothy should make his initial bow to the society that claimed Reggie at the first hunt of the season. They had been welcomed with hilarity by the youthful crowd and the hunt was a joyous occa-

sion. Timothy however did not like it and was now alone on the long, narrow country road.

Once more, but nearer this time, he heard the bay of the pack. Reynard was clearly making the circle of the hills. If Timothy waited he would probably be able to catch another glimpse of the horsemen through the trees before him. But he had lost interest in the hunt, and he swung from his horse and rang a bell cleverly concealed by an old-fashioned knocker on the rustic gate hidden with such charming affectation in the great hedge, intending to ask his way to the club-house. As, bridle in hand, he stood waiting, suddenly through the underbrush, across the road, the fox darted out and straight toward him. The poor beast was all in. His sides heaved, his tongue was far out and he was so exhausted it was all he could do to slink across the road to the supposed shelter of the hedge, unaware of Timothy's presence until almost at his feet. For one moment, on perceiving this new danger, he crouched fearfully, like a beaten dog, too tired to run from this unexpected foe.

Timothy's heart gave a great throb of compassion for this miserable shrinking brute. He heard the hounds as they caught the new trail and were clearly coming straight toward the hedge over the hills.

The hedge was impassable, the road long and bare without enough underbrush to conceal a rabbit, the fox could hardly run and the dogs were comparatively fresh. With a glance Timothy took in the situation and almost on the instant of the fox's appearance, he drew a pistol and quickly, deliberately, shot the trembling beaten creature. He had secretly brought the pistol that morning with some such vague intention as the present, thinking that if the sight was too much for him, he could shoot the brute as the hounds leaped on him to tear him to pieces. Now as he held the smoking pistol in his hand and glanced down at the mercifully dead fox the guilty knowledge that he had broken all the rules of the hunt seized him with the fear of a small boy up to mischief. He thrust the pistol in his pocket, lifted the fox to the saddle bow and was about to swing into the saddle and ride across the farther hill to elude the rapidly approaching hounds, when the gate behind him opened and a small shrill voice said excitedly :

“ Come, quickly.”

Over the crest of the opposite hill appeared the hounds, and promptly, without a word, Timothy obeyed the summons and led his horse through the gate, which was immediately shut and fastened.

He turned to his rescuer and saw a little old lady

in a lace cap and a gaily-sprigged gown of lavender, a snowy kerchief folded across her breast. The eyes under the cap with its jaunty bow were small and bright, the cheeks, smooth and rounded as a baby's, were slightly flushed with excitement. She raised one slender hand for silence, leaned a moment toward the gate with her ear near the grating, then as the approaching dogs and horses could be distinctly heard, she turned quickly, laid a finger on her lips, and catching up the long skirt of her dainty gown, ran lightly down a narrow path toward a grove of trees and a thicket of shrubbery, motioning for Timothy to follow her.

The hounds were at the gate now, barking, yelping, whining, brought to a halt, completely puzzled. The two in the garden heard the approach of the horsemen, heard their outraged clamor rising higher and higher. The fox had disappeared but how, where? He must have been wounded when slipping under some barbed-wire fence, for the dogs had found a pool of blood. But what had become of the fox? He could not have got through the hedge, for there was a stone wall the other side for just such emergencies, and the gate was closed and locked.

Timothy followed the little old lady, leading his horse on the grass to deaden its footsteps. Soon

the excited voices grew less distinct and were drowned in the babble of a little brook they crossed on a rustic bridge as picturesque as the postern gate in the high green hedge. In the midst of the grove of trees and shrubs was a small summer-house, cleverly concealed until one was almost on it. It was hung forlornly with the dead vines of winter and empty save for a built-in table and two settees. The trees and shrubs had been planted so thickly that in summer nothing could be seen beyond their leafy screen, but now through the bare boughs one caught a distant glimpse of a stable roof and the glitter of greenhouses.

CHAPTER XV

CONSPIRATORS

THE little old lady laid her hand on Timothy's arm with the charming freedom of the old and the very young, and with one finger on her lip, bent her head to listen. She made a quaint picture on the narrow woodland path in her lavender gown, her soft lace cap and buckled slippers. Her face was oddly free from wrinkles for one of her age. It was her hands that betrayed her if her dress had not done so, small hands, delicate, pretty, but thin and wrinkled, the knuckles somewhat too big for the beauty they once had had. Beneath the lace ruffles of her cap, a delightful reminder of the long ago when ladies grew old with grace and sweetness, her hair was light rather than white, though at first the effect was the same. Her eyes, like her hands, revealed her age. They seemed very, very tired, filled with an odd wistfulness as one who has seen the world go by and has had no part in the long, glittering, merry and sad procession.

Like guilty children, fearful of the consequences of a raid on the jam closet, the old man and the old

woman stood a moment on the woodland path, flecked with the autumn sunshine through the bare boughs overhead, without speaking. When the last sound of the outraged hunt had died away and the quiet of the country had settled around them once more, the little old lady glanced at Timothy and laughed gaily, her eyes filled with a mixture of daring and delight.

"I don't suppose it was according to Hoyle," said Timothy, smiling down at her.

"It was a horrible crime," chuckled the little old lady with a nervous flutter of her small thin hands. "Horrible, horrible—but I am glad you did it. Poor, poor beastly! So tired, so miserable, waiting to be torn to pieces!" And she gently patted the fox's head as it hung down the side of the horse, with its glazed eyes staring, its tongue still lolling out.

"They call it hunting," sneered Timothy softly, stroking the long lean nose.

"Did you never hunt before?" asked the little old lady, pausing in her patting of the fox to look up at him.

"Yes," said Timothy, "long ago when I was a boy. I had a measly cack-eared, lop-sided terrier once, and I and a dozen lads of the same age used

to go into my father's granary and start a rat for the dog to chase and worry."

"I used to ride to hounds," confessed the little old lady diffidently, "and not so long ago, either."

"Were you ever in at the finish?"

"Once," said she. "Oh, long ago when I was young and cruel. But never again. It was quite nasty. The dogs — It seemed to me like a dogs' fight — only worse — the poor little hunted fox with his staring eyes and lolling tongue — I can remember how he looked yet, and it was quite nasty. I never tried to keep up again. I just rode after the hounds, far behind them."

"You must let me give you your second brush," said Timothy.

"I have none," said the little old lady. "I wouldn't keep the other. They gave it to me but I couldn't forget the beasty's eyes and I threw it away. It seemed like murder to me. Have you never ridden to hounds before?"

"No, thank God," said Timothy.

The little old lady nodded and laughed. "That is the way I feel. I am a member of the club in good standing, and now an accessory to your crime. What can we do with the evidence?"

She puckered her brows, frowned portentously

and tapped her lips as she thoughtfully considered the situation.

"I shall see to the evidence," said Timothy, amused. "Don't worry about that."

"You can't leave here with it," she objected. "You would be seen and my reputation would be gone."

"I shall be careful. No one will see me leave here, and I won't breathe a word of you."

But the little old lady shook her head. "They will be going home from the hunt now, and so many of them pass this way. You see—" with another flutter of her small thin hands, "I know that they are wrong and you are right, but I would die before I admitted it, to them. I don't know why. They couldn't kill me. I am simply a traitor to my thoughts."

"Unhappily," said Timothy, "we all are."

"Unhappily?" questioned the little old lady with a lift of her delicate brows.

"Think of the happiness," explained Timothy, "to have the courage to tell your neighbor what you thought of him."

"Think of the misery of hearing what he has to say about you."

"No misery," said Timothy. "You wouldn't believe it."

"Of course you wouldn't," agreed the little old lady, with an amused chuckle.

"This is no crime, but an act of mercy," declared Timothy.

"Which we must hide," said she, "and never mention."

"Flourish not your good deeds before men," said Timothy, "lest they sneer at you and call you a prig."

"But how can we hide it?" And once more the little old lady puckered up her face and looked at Timothy in perplexity.

Timothy thought a moment. His companion watched him anxiously, stroking the fox's nose. After a moment Timothy glanced at his watch and then nodded.

"If you could get me a shovel, I can bury him here, in these thickets and no one would ever know. It is only a few minutes till eleven. I could do it and get back to the club before lunch."

"You could stay here for lunch," suggested the little old lady.

But Timothy shook his head. "I had better not," he pointed out. "We must not arouse suspicion. I can slip away without any one seeing me and then Van won't worry what's become of me. We always lunch together."

"Reggie Van de Water Boggs?" questioned the little old lady, her eyes opening very wide.

Timothy nodded, wondering where he had ever seen the old lady before. He knew that he never had done so, but she seemed vaguely familiar, recalled a picture he must have seen once. She reminded him of Van and yet she was a great deal too old to be Reggie's mother. He had seen a recent picture of Mrs. Boggs in sables and a great plumed hat, looking hardly more than forty.

"You are—?"

"Timothy Marshall Payne, your humble servant," and Timothy bowed with courtly grace.

The little old lady laughed cheerily and held out her hand. "I am so glad," said she, "to know you. I am Mrs. Betsy Pratt, of Windemere." And looking straight into Timothy's eyes, Reggie's mother laid her hand in his.

Timothy raised it gallantly to his lips.

"Have you ever heard of me?" asked Reggie's mother with roguish eyes.

"I never have," declared Timothy.

"I have gone into seclusion that I may grow old," confided Reggie's mother.

"We are all growing old, in seclusion and out of it."

"But not with pleasure," declared Reggie's

mother. "Everlasting youth is one of the inane clamors of the present day. People talk about eighty years young, ninety years young. It is silly, I think. Age is just a state like childhood and youth. It is not a disgrace. I want to be old simply, the way my grandparents were when nobody had any nerves and gray hairs were an honor."

Timothy shook his head whimsically. "You can't do it, dear lady. You will always be young."

She shook her head. "Your compliment does not please me. Does not that prove that I am very, very old? And the way I talk about myself—that too is a sign of age, is it not? I love to talk about myself."

"We all do when we have done something worth while," declared Timothy. "That is a sign of success, not age."

"I have a grown son—"

"You could have a grown grandson and you would still be young."

"But I want to be old."

"You can never be old."

"You disappoint me. I thought you, too, would like age, not be a silly follower of these hysterical times when all the women are beautiful and all the men are rich and everybody is young."

She stood in the middle of the path and flung out

her thin old hands with a gesture of youthful fervor as she stood before Timothy who still held the horse by the bridle, smiling down at her, while the horse cropped the scant grass still found beneath the dried leaves and the dead fox still hung across the saddle bow.

"I do believe in age and growing old," declared Timothy. "I was sympathizing with you, for you can never grow old. You have eternal youth."

"Eternal silliness," snapped the little old lady.

"Eternal wisdom," corrected Timothy. "Youth is the only time when one is fully convinced that one knows it all."

"Oh, youth," cried the little old lady. "Oh, vapid callow mushiness! Oh, wealth of tiring boring greenness! Oh, verdant insipidity!"

"Aren't you a bit hard on youth?" asked Timothy.

"No, I am tolerant of it. I pity it so," returned the little old lady.

The stable clock chiming eleven recalled them to the fact that the fox was still unburied.

The little old lady started. "I shall hurry and get the shovel," said she. "I forgot about it. Another sign of age, to forget easily."

"Another sign of youth, to become so interested

in the topic under discussion, that nothing else is of any importance."

The little old lady laughed and shook her head. "I shall get the shovel. If the coachman or gardener hears of this they will tell it to the club servants and then my reputation is gone. I shall tell Thomas, the gardener, I want to dig a while in my special bed in front of the house, then I shall go around the house and come here when no one is looking. I must be careful. Nobody must know that at my time of life, I am burying foxes in the back yard with a gentleman and no chaperon."

"Did you think I was never coming?" she asked as, flushed and disheveled, she returned, appearing suddenly in exactly the opposite direction from that in which she had disappeared. "It is so hard to allay people's suspicions when they have none."

The ground was hard and Timothy old and unused to heavy manual labor, so it was after twelve before he had dug a grave deep enough in his opinion and that of Reggie's mother, laid Reynard in it and covered him up. Then they piled stones upon it and strewed it thickly with dead leaves.

She again urged him to stay to luncheon, but he refused, and she led him back through the woods to the small gate in the high green hedge.

"I happened to be passing as you rang," she ex-

plained. "I had heard the hounds and I was coming to open the gate and watch the hunt go by. It is a pretty sight if you get there too late to see the fox. Won't you come again?"

"There is another hunt day after to-morrow," said Timothy. "May I come then?"

Her eyes laughed gaily. "Yes, do. But don't tell any one where you go. Let's keep our friendship a secret, shall we? Even from your beloved Van?"

Timothy raised her hand to his lips again and agreed.

"What was the matter?" asked Reggie that night as the two dined alone. "Didn't you enjoy the meet?"

"Yes, indeed. I enjoyed it immensely."

"Why did you fall so far behind? You ride well and you had a good mount. Did you get tired?"

"I dropped out," explained Timothy, "because it was so unfair. It made me think of poverty, everybody and everything down on one poor devil."

The next morning Reggie received a letter from his mother.

"Dear Reggie: I'm off again — gone to France — sailed last night. I don't know how long I shall

be away, but don't bother to write. You know how I hate to. If anything happens we can cablegram. Don't worry about me and forgive my slipping away like this. I shall let you know the minute I get back. Do be a good boy and give my disapproval to 'father.' With all my love, Mother."

Reggie chuckled at the characteristic letter and the usual suddenness of his mother's journeys, and tossed the note into the fire.

"Mother's gone to Europe," he told Timothy, as he picked up another letter.

"What is the name of that place she has just bought on Long Island?" asked Timothy, wondering if it were anywhere near Windemere.

"She won't name it," replied Reggie. "She says it is terribly plebeian nowadays to name your place. All the nouveau riche do it. I think it is about five miles from the club-house, though I am not sure. I haven't been there more than once. But I know how to get to it. I'll point it out some day, if we are in the neighborhood and I don't forget."

During the weeks that followed, Timothy attended the meets with ever growing enthusiasm. What he did during the run was never quite known. He always disappeared almost as soon as the fox was sighted and sometimes before, reappearing as

the tired horses were returning to the club, occasionally not turning up until long after lunch, when Reggie was about to crank up the car for the return to the city.

"I like to ride," he explained vaguely to Reggie's questions as to what fun he got out of the meets.

"Sometimes we only chase an anise-seed bag," complained Reggie, "and yet you leave us just the same. So it can't be because you think us so heartless."

"No, no," said Timothy, still vague, apologetic. "I like to ride, but I like to take my own time. I'm growing old, Van."

It was at the last meet of the season that Reggie met Helen for the first time since his return. She was tired of the sport and more interested in her work in town, she explained, as they shook hands and he asked her why she had not been out before.

"We simply do it because the English do," she added with one of those flashes of psychological insight into their lives that always disconcerted Reggie. "We don't do it for the pure love of the sport. It is not bred in our bones as it is in a certain class of the English. It is simply a grafted sport with us. A good imitation but not the real

thing — for we are not the real thing, the majority of us."

"You are," Reggie declared. "Your people were here in colonial times."

"Everybody's were, Reggie," she laughed, "as soon as we get a million or so, even the Rubensteinsteins."

"You will make me a cynic," complained Reggie. "I shall wonder now how many of these beauteous damsels are doing it because they like it and how many are doing it just for show."

"We all like to show off," said she mischievously. "You are looking well." And her eyes rested on him a moment questioningly and half proudly — for Reggie looked his best that morning in his red jacket, seated on his skittish horse.

"I am feeling fine," said he, and as Timothy just then rode up: "Helen, you remember Mr. Payne?"

Helen flushed with an absurd mixture of resentment and jealousy and bowed coldly.

"Yes, indeed," said she sweetly, but not offering her hand, pretending to be busy with her prancing horse. "How do you do?"

Molly O'Brien hailed Timothy joyously, and raising his hat to Helen, the old man turned and joined the rosy-cheeked Irish lass and her still ar-

dent admirers, Willie Collins and Monty Browne.

Helen glanced after him while a pain like a knife seemed to be stabbing her heart. Reggie cared more for this old man than he possibly could for her, she told herself with unexpected and unacknowledged bitterness, and she looked at him, unconsciously reproachful. She thought it was because of his misdeeds and so did Reggie, who immediately flushed but said nothing, the old coldness creeping between them.

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. MCBRIDE

“THE reformer and the reformee should be left alone together,” declared Willie Collins gaily, as Timothy joined them.

“What else are Molly and I?” demanded Monty, surprised at his brilliance and the rare tact in his remark.

“The reformed,” said Willie, and Molly joined the laugh.

“Silly, aren’t they?” Mrs. McBride asked of Timothy with a motion of her crop after the three as the hunt started slowly toward the road and Timothy fell in beside her.

“Young,” returned Timothy. “Oh, vapid, callow mushiness!” he quoted, thinking of a little old lady in a gaily-sprigged lavender gown, a lace cap with a jaunty bow atilt on her soft hair.

“Do I appear so old in contrast?” asked Mrs. McBride, glancing at him amused. She looked well in her habit and red coat, tall and slender, and she rode with a certain conscious grace, listless and frankly bored.

Timothy looked at her gravely. "You are tired," said he gently, as one would speak to a sick child.

Timothy rode with the ease of one who has ridden much in childhood and he looked especially well in his gay riding clothes. His delicate smooth-shaved face, with the whimsical mouth and deep-set, kindly eyes, was that of a man still in his prime. He had grown ten years younger with good living and no worry. To think of him as too old for further romance was absurd. To some women a man of his age was far more fascinating than a younger, less experienced man would be. A flush crept into Mrs. McBride's cheeks; as she listened to his gentle voice, she felt a sudden thrill—a sensation not felt for years, while her pulse quickened and her eyes brightened. But she did not look at him, lest her eyes fill with tears at his sympathy, so unexpected and unforeseen.

"I am tired," said she, reaching timidly forth for more. "I—I am unhappy. That always tires one, don't you think?"

Timothy was painfully surprised at the veiled confidence. He was thinking of a little old lady who never seemed to get tired and he had answered at random. He did not care for Mrs. McBride. *With her faultless clothes, her well-cared-for body*

and empty eyes she was as foolish in her way as Annie was in hers. Both were hopeless products of their environments, neither with any character whatever, either to rise or fall unless at the behest of a stronger will. But Timothy was always sorry for everybody and everything that needed or asked for his sympathy, character or no character, foolish or simple or wise, man or woman or dog. So his voice grew softer as he replied.

"Yes, unhappiness is tiring, terribly so. It tires the soul and compared to that tiredness, the weariness of the body is nothing."

She smiled at him quickly and nodded her head with the pleasure one feels in meeting one who understands.

"Yes, yes, that is so," she murmured gratefully. "But there is nothing one can do to throw off that terrible weariness, unless one becomes happy, and that under some circumstances is impossible."

"It is indeed," agreed Timothy gravely.

There was a deep quick bay from the hounds as the fox was sighted. Dogs and horses sprang forward, and those behind sweeping by separated Timothy and Mrs. McBride.

As Timothy approached the small postern gate in the high green hedge, it opened and Betsy Boggs motioned him to enter. She wore a long red cloak,

with an attached hood over her small gray head. The bright color made her look years older, deepening the sallowness of her cheeks, but she loved red and in this old-age retreat she wore with joyous abandonment those colors and clothes she would never have dared to wear in society.

"I was expecting you," said she, "so I came down to meet you."

They walked back to the house together, beneath the bare trees, over the smooth lawns. Timothy gave his horse to a groom and they paced up and down the long veranda, the old gentleman in his hunting clothes and the little old lady in her absurd red cloak.

"I have heard of Reggie," said Reggie's mother. "Has he never spoken to you of me?"

"No," said Timothy.

"Has no one ever spoken of me?" she pressed him, wistfully, Timothy thought, but Betsy Boggs was curious to know if he did not yet suspect something.

"I never talk to anybody about anybody," explained Timothy. "I am a stranger yet, not initiated."

"I have heard about you though," she declared, nodding. "I have heard that you are a fine business man and are quite reforming Reggie. They

say he goes to business almost every morning now."

"He does every morning except when we come down here. He is a good boy."

"Due to father or mother?" queried Reggie's mother innocently.

Timothy flushed. "Have you, too, heard of 'father?'" he asked in grim disgust.

She looked at him as though cheerfully unconscious of his meaning. "Yes. I guess every one has," said she guilelessly. "Sydney Boggs was a drunkard and a fool, I guess, from all I have heard. I never knew him, never knew any of the family well. I dare say, they do not know I exist."

"That first day I met you," said Timothy, "you made me think of Van. I don't know why. But he is lovable—and so are you."

"Do I make you think so now?" asked Betsy Boggs, staring straight ahead of her.

"No. The resemblance has disappeared, but the loveliness is still there."

"How do you like Henrietta McBride?" demanded Betsy Boggs, to change the subject.

"I don't know her," confessed Timothy, "except to pass the time o' day."

"She likes you, Timothy Payne," laughed Betsy Boggs a bit tartly.

"How do you know?"

"I know. Has she told you her troubles yet?"

"I didn't know she had any."

"She has. She is married."

Timothy laughed. "There is Reno, not so far away," he suggested.

Betsy nodded. "But she's too late. That is her grievance. You see, it has gone out of style to be divorced. Such silliness! To let the styles regulate your heart's affection!"

"It's just as well they are regulated by something," declared Timothy, thinking of the half-veiled confession he had been about to hear.

"I suppose so, for such people as she, all cut out on the same pattern like those paper dolls I used to make when I was a child. Did you ever do it? Fold a piece of paper again and again, then cut the outline of a person and unfold. You will have a string of people all identically alike, holding hands. Well, that's Henrietta McBride."

The little old lady's voice was quite tart now, and she nodded her head firmly, stubbornly.

"How do you know she likes me?" asked Timothy.

"I know. I know Henrietta McBride. She will claim you for her affinity some day. Mark my words."

Timothy returned home about four that evening. He found that Reggie had not yet come in and went to the club in the hope of meeting him. But Reggie was not there.

He had persuaded Helen to let him take her home after the hunt and the girl had consented. She had seen the tenderness in his eyes as he looked after Timothy that day when the old man had turned and left them, and she wondered if his feeling for her were growing less in the love he bore for "father." She had heard that he had given up high-balls and taken to business, and his appearance certainly vouched for the truth of the rumor. His eyes were bright, his color was good and his hands were steady. She consented with a sudden quick pleasure at being with him again, alone and on a friendly footing.

She asked him in to have some tea, and while he was there a few of the old exclusive set to which Reggie had once belonged came in and greeted him with old-time cordiality.

Reggie was pleased. He was good-natured and kindly disposed and the bitter ostracism of two years ago had hurt him terribly. He thought he had grown indifferent to what others thought of him and was surprised at the sudden rush of pleasure their friendly informality caused him. But

he had grown, as Helen noticed with a quick flashing up of her pride in him. He was graver, more gentle and more reserved. He concealed his pleasure, acting as though he had never been on any but the most friendly footing with all. But when he and Helen were alone for a moment in the hall as he was leaving, he tried to deny his pleasure by his old-time sarcasm.

"Not forgiven, but not forgotten, either," said he, with a bit of a laugh which he tried to make indifferent, but which trembled toward the end with the longing he had felt and had never been able to crush, to be back among his old friends again.

"They always have liked you, Reggie," declared Helen, pleased herself. "We all have."

"If I'm good," sneered Reggie, pausing to draw on his gloves. Then he laughed away his scorn and raised her hand to his lips. "I will be good," he promised gaily, in the joy of his spirit, as he kissed the girl's cool hand resting so lightly in his.

It was late and he decided to go to the club, sure he would find Timothy there. They two could ride home together.

He found Timothy playing, or trying to play, billiards with Willie and Monty and a few others of the youthful element. All had been taking

something stronger than water, but Timothy was the only one to show it. He had drunk with first one, then another, until his old craving had sprung up again and he drank when the others refused, and half laughing, half fearful, urged him not to. They were all laughing at the old man's antics when the door opened and Reggie came in.

He paused a moment on the threshold as he took in the scene and a sudden quick hush fell over all but Timothy. He was leaning far over the table, trying with drunken gravity to hit a ball.

"See double," he explained merrily, looking up at the once hilarious but now grave circle of youthful faces. Then he looked beyond and saw Reggie, fresh and ruddy from the cold autumn twilight.

"Hullo, Reshie," he called, waving the cue at him. "Watsh fasher."

Monty glanced at Reggie's angry face, still red from the buffeting of the wind that had arisen since the sun went down, and discreetly withdrew to a distant rack, where he busied himself carefully examining some cues. Reggie looked at Timothy and could have sworn with mingled grief and rage, for Timothy was no longer the upright good-looking gentleman of whom he had been so proud, that morning, but a silly, foolish old man, not drunk and yet not sober, wholly ludicrous, and where a younger

man would have been disgusting, ridiculously pitiful, as he strove to hit a ball directly at the end of his cue. Reggie doubted that Willie and Monty were directly and intentionally responsible for Timothy's condition. "Father" had always been a huge joke to them, but Reggie felt that they would hardly go so far as to jeopardize their membership by deliberately getting the old man drunk. But they knew his tendency for drink and could have stopped him if they had wanted to do so. Though they seemed ominously grave now that Reggie had come, it was clear that they had thoroughly enjoyed the situation. The others in the circle were entirely innocent, and quite helpless though amused spectators.

Willie through sheer embarrassment approached Reggie innocently and offered him a drink. Then for the first time in the history of the club Reginald Van de Water Boggs refused to drink.

"Thank you," said he coldly. "I do not drink."

He went to Timothy and laid his hand on his shoulder. "Come on home, Tim," said he. "It is almost dinner-time."

But Timothy was in the obstinate stage of drink and refused flatly to go home. Reggie urged him gently, firmly, angrily and then gently again, but the old man would not be cajoled away from his

game. He tried to hit the ball, missed, laughed foolishly and glanced in drunken mischief at the others for their laugh, which for the first time did not come. Reggie was filled with sick disgust and mortification. His hands grew hot and moist and he knew that his face was redder than Timothy's though the color whipped into it by the wind had long since disappeared. He felt as he had so often made Dobbins feel when that good fellow had sought to lure him home while he was yet not quite hopeless.

Tactfully, all present slipped away except Willie. Reggie and he, after a long miserable argument, using flattery, threats, inducements, got Timothy to go with them. He walked steadily enough and passing through the hall between the two young men, who did not touch him, he appeared sober. At the door Reggie stopped and turned to Willie, and Monty, who had followed them.

"Thanks, Collins," said he coldly, "but I hold you two responsible for this."

"Us?" gasped Monty.

"I don't see why, Boggs," objected Willie, flushing angrily.

"You knew what that filthy stuff does to him," snapped Reggie.

"By what right could I have interfered with a

man if he wanted to drink?" questioned Willie, watching the hot blood flame higher in Reggie's angry mortified face.

"You had a perfect right," returned Reggie. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

He glanced furiously from one angry youth to the other, and taking Timothy's arm led him out.

"Well, by jove," said Monty with his usual rare brilliance.

"Reggie," said Willie slowly, gazing at the closed door, "should have been a parson instead of a rich man."

It was dark when Reggie helped Timothy into the car and started home. The liquor had made Timothy drowsy and he dozed fitfully in the tonneau of the open car, in a fur-lined overcoat, with a fur rug over his knees. Reggie at the wheel, busy with his own grim thoughts, turned the car into the line of home-going traffic up the avenue.

Helen was sure to hear about this in some more or less accurate form and she would then in all probability refuse to have anything more to do with him as she had once done. It would hurt worse now for she had grown so friendly again. She would not understand. If she did not turn from him, she would advise casting Timothy off lest the old man *drag him* down again. He had seen the idea in her

eyes that morning at the meet when Timothy had joined them. If he explained that he was the stronger and could pull Timothy up instead of Timothy being able to pull him down, she would not believe him. She would quite frankly doubt his strength. If on the other hand he admitted that Timothy might ruin him, but quoted the Bible in extenuation, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake will find it," she would tell him that was foolish, a needless sacrifice of himself for the old man. The Bible did not mean that. Helen believed in the Bible and flattered herself that she followed its teachings, and she did follow them to the best of her ability, but she translated it in a modern hygienic way and dwelt to a great extent on the sense the Lord had given his children to keep them from being led astray by the heart and a too emotional rendering of his words. Reggie possessed a strong strain of religious fanaticism which his impulsive nature encouraged rather than discouraged.

The more he did for Timothy and the longer they lived together, the stronger grew his love for the gentle-hearted, gallant old man who, like myself, had been fighting a losing fight when chance had thrown them together for the good of each, and more so for Reggie than for Timothy. Reggie frankly acknowledged all he owed to Timothy,

realizing at the same time that he would never be able to convince any one that the favors were not all on the other side, any one but Dobbins. The round-faced, quiet little serving man with the knowledge of intimacy knew as well as Reggie did himself, what Timothy had done for him.

No, he could never give Timothy up now. Helen would have to think what she pleased, and do what she thought best. He needed Timothy as much as Timothy needed him, more, indeed, for the fires and passions of youth which had been likely to land Reggie on the rocks and might do so even now, under certain circumstances, had died out of the old man. He would simply drift on with the tide; his sprees sober affairs, easily handled and soon over.

CHAPTER XVII

A RICH YOUNG WOMAN

TIMOTHY refused to dress for dinner, explaining with tipsy earnestness that to change one's clothes for the meal was foolish form, empty and meaning nothing except a superabundance of money, tainted, for no man was rich nowadays except by fraud — he, thank God, had always been poor. His good spirits mounted higher and higher with every course. He demanded port with the soup and champagne with the roast.

Reggie had consulted Dobbins in the privacy of his own room, not as master and man, but as man to man, whether Timothy's drunk should not be stopped where it was. The cold ride home had partially sobered him.

Dobbins stopped brushing the hunting-coat preparatory to putting it away and shook his head. "I don't think you can do it, Mr. Boggs," said he, from long experience. "His appetite is up now. Better let him have the stuff here where we can keep an eye on him than let him sneak out and go down-town on one of those old toots of his."

Reggie frowned at the floor doubtfully, his hands clasped behind him. "He is so old," he muttered. "When he's drunk, it's so — er —"

Dobbins nodded sympathetically. "I know, sir, it is. But he has not gone on a bat for a long time now. He gets over them soon and braces up fine. It has become a habit now, sir, and his system has become accustomed, as it were, to so much every so often. It doesn't hurt him none. We can get him to bed quietly and to-morrow he will be all right again. I'd let him have it, sir."

"You are a wise old bird, Dobbins," said Reggie, glancing with warm appreciation at his servant who appeared to him for the second time in the possible light of a man. "Where'd you learn so much?"

"Waiting on gentlemen, sir," said Dobbins with an accent that caused Reggie to look at him sharply as he turned again discreetly to the clothes he was brushing.

Reggie found Timothy in the library waiting with a whisky and soda for him, two of which he himself had already taken. He was about to confiscate Reggie's, had the young man not appeared at that moment. Reggie had not intended to drink, deciding to remain sober and put Timothy to bed, *but the hot sweet odor tempted him, arousing his*

old appetite. When Helen heard of that afternoon she would believe him guilty, would blame him as though he were, so why not be? His fingers closed around the glass and he raised it to his lips.

At first he drank with Timothy glass for glass, and ordered the butler to bring whatever Timothy asked for, but after the first three glasses, Timothy, already half drunk, was entirely so, while Reggie was still perfectly sober. He looked across the long table with the silver and cut-glass at the foolish old man lolling in the great carved chair, his face red and moist, his eyes bleared, his drooling mouth half open, and as always, he saw himself. A disgust as much for himself as for Timothy rushed over him and as the butler bent to refill his glass, he motioned him away. He was physically sick and wanted no more of the stuff.

It was a long meal and through it all Reggie sat grimly, with white face and nervously twitching fingers, watching Timothy — the old man he had grown to love — becoming more and more revolting and more and more pitiful, with his white hair, his thin face and trembling old hands. Once the butler glanced nervously at his master as he hesitated about refilling one of Timothy's glasses, but Reggie nodded to him coldly to do so, and the man obeyed. It was torture for Reggie. Never

before had he sat coolly by and watched Timothy drink. He had always himself outstripped the old man and was generally the first to be put to bed.

With the salad, Timothy doubled up and slid quite suddenly out of sight under the table. It was a comical thing to see the foolish old bloated face one moment, and the next moment not to see it, like an enormous Jack-in-the-box, and the butler, just entering the room with another bottle, paused on the threshold in surprise and a badly-choked desire to burst into great roars of laughter. His tongue clicked against the roof of his mouth and the glasses on the tray rattled loudly in the silent room.

But the humor indifferent spectators see in a drunken fool is pain to those who love the fool. As the old man disappeared so suddenly from sight, Reggie, taken completely by surprise, not having expected the catastrophe for some little time yet, rose automatically to his feet. For a moment he stared dully at the empty chair, then aware of the butler's astonished presence in the room behind him, he turned quickly.

"Throw that filthy stuff away," he ordered.

"Yes, sir."

"How is the wine-cellar?"

"Nearly full, sir."

"Empty it and never allow another drop of liquor of any kind, any kind, understand, to be brought into this house."

"Yes, sir. But — er — the seasoning?"

"Seasoning?"

"For sauces and puddings, sir?"

"See that sauces and puddings of that kind aren't made. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Dobbins, who had heard the expected fall from the butler's pantry where he had been waiting for it, entered, went to the foot of the table and without a word, quietly, skilfully, drew out the chair and bent over Timothy. Reggie motioned the butler away and himself helped Dobbins carry the old man up-stairs to bed.

November passed and December came, a warm murky December, damp and rainy. Timothy's business was going better than his most sanguine hopes had expected. He was hard at work in his office every day until after five, except two days in the week, when he left at one, lunched with Reggie as usual and then took the train to Long Island. What these mysterious jaunts were Reggie was not able to discover, though he teased Timothy unmercifully to find out.

Timothy explained that they were to an old

friend, a Mrs. Pratt, of Windemere. Did Reggie know her? And Reggie, amused, confessed that he did not.

"Is she young or old, Tim?" he asked one day as they lunched together just before Timothy was to leave for Long Island.

"Divinely old and eternally young," replied Timothy, lighting his good cigar with the pleasure he had not yet become used to.

"Tim, you rascal, I'll wager you are jealous of me and that's why you will never take me to meet your friend."

Timothy nodded with a chuckle. "It's not jealousy, simply discretion."

"Discretion is the wiser part of love," teased Reggie.

"The older part," corrected Timothy, a flush creeping into his old cheeks.

Looking at him across the table, it did not seem absurd to Reggie, his talking of love. Like Mrs. McBride, indeed it seemed perfectly natural, and he teased Timothy as he would have done a younger man. He was curious to know more of the lady than simply that she was Mrs. Pratt, of Windemere, but he made no inquiries save from Timothy, imagining that she was a well-to-do widow, either not wealthy enough to enter society, or that rare ex-

ception to the eternal feminine, indifferent to it. He heard nothing from his mother but as she never wrote to him except in emergencies, he was not surprised or worried. So Reggie joked Timothy and gave him subtle advice that Timothy hardly heard, for Timothy was already in love with the little old lady, with her bright eyes and ready tongue, and now on the way to her, his thoughts were too occupied to pay attention to the idle chatter of a child.

Reggie worked as hard and as long as Timothy now, but that day he closed his office at four, left a few instructions to his secretary and went around to a settlement house on the East Side where he had promised to meet Helen and take her home. The story of the billiard game had to his surprise rebounded to his credit. Reggie Boggs, refusing a drink and declaring in calm matter-of-fact terms before his startled friends that he did not drink, was too good to be kept and soon spread from one to another, finally reaching Helen and filling her with pleased surprise. She had immediately telephoned Reggie to come to dinner, and he had gone, dazed, but happy.

The settlement home was a tall, narrow, dirty building crowded in between two other buildings equally tall and narrow and dirty. Reggie brought

the car to a stop and waited. He watched the constant throng of ragged humanity and it amused him to think of Helen among them, with her blooming health engendered by her plenty and her lack of all worry and mental strain, Helen with her maid, her porcelain bath, her limousine, down here advising these worn-out, mentally dwarfed women, overworked mothers, worn with poverty and child-bearing how often to take baths, to brush their hair and clean their teeth. That they were too tired to want to bathe was met by Helen with the reply that a bath would refresh them. That the tub was probably doing duty as an ice-box for several families, as a wood and coal bin, as a bed or a clothes-press would never enter Helen's head. Why should it? What did she know of the hundreds of petty economies of these ragged mortals whom she in her health and security stooped to help?

"I wouldn't understand as much as I do, if it were not for Tim," thought Reggie. "And I don't begin to grasp their misery — or pleasures, for they enjoy life in their way, sometimes. It isn't all tears, bitter sobs, regret."

The house door opened and Helen in her expensive but very simple black dress and small modish hat, with her bright eyes, rosy cheeks and erect figure, came out. She was followed by a nonde-

script crowd of black-browed, stolid peasant women. Over their heads were draped filthy shawls in which they rolled their hands and effectually concealed parts of the lunch Helen always gave them and which they made do for supper. The great throbbing motor-car with the liveried chauffeur seemed to Reggie almost an insult in that locality, and as he climbed out and stood waiting for Helen, he felt oddly ashamed, as though he should apologize.

Helen stood a moment chatting with a gay appearance of equality to the women who watched her with blank indifference in their eyes and absolutely no expression on their faces. Helen was with them but not of them, though she thought she was.

"She can't ever be," thought Reggie, "until she realizes that she can learn as much from them as they from her."

With a few last words to the women, she nodded a kindly good-by and crossed the pavement to Reggie. He helped her into the tonneau, climbed in beside her and closed the door. The car started slowly. Glancing back at the group of women watching them with expressionless pasty faces, Reggie raised his cap with gentle courtesy. Helen laid her hand quickly on his arm, her face sweet and

tender. It was little things like that that Reggie was always doing that endeared him so to her.

"Reggie," she cried softly, "I am so glad you did that."

"Glad I was polite," laughed Reggie.

"To them," said she and then blushed. "How silly! I don't mean that. Why shouldn't you be polite to them?"

"I should be," said Reggie. "But I felt ashamed of this car, Helen. It was like a slap in their faces — my coming for you in it."

"No, it wasn't," contradicted Helen. "They know I have money. Why shouldn't I meet them as frankly as I do my other friends? Why go to them in doleful rags, pretending I am as poor as they when they know I am not and I know that they know it. It would be silly affectation; I think we ought to treat them as frankly and openly as we do friends."

She flushed eagerly and looked anxiously at Reggie, feeling a trifle angry because Reggie, the drunkard, the man she had striven so hard to reform and had been forced finally to give up as hopeless, always put her in the wrong, always forced her to defend herself and her ideas.

Reggie nodded gravely. "That's all right, *Helen*, to be frank and all that. It's very sensible.

But they are not your friends and you are not theirs."

"Reggie," Helen was really hurt. "I am their friend."

"No you are not, excuse me. There is no friendship where there is condescension."

"I do not condescend to them. How can you say that? I realize that they are unfortunate—"

"And you are fortunate—"

"But through no merit on my own part. Reggie, I protest you are unkind. I meet them in perfect equality."

"I don't mean to be unkind, dear, but I began to think just how things are as I was waiting for you. Without knowing it, you do condescend. Now, dear, admit it. Aren't you glad you are not as dirty as they are?"

"Yes, but—"

"Don't you vow in your secret heart that you never would be even if you were as poor?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then, you say you want to be frank with them, but you aren't. You aren't even frank with yourself."

"I am doing all this for show, I suppose," she cried, her eyes full of tears.

But Reggie did not see the tears. He was full

of his ideas and rushed on. "In a way, yes. You think you are nice to do it for them, and you are, dear. You are lovely and kind, but just be frank with yourself. If you really felt that you were one of them and wanted to be one of them, to share as with sisters and brothers, you would give your all and live down here among them and be one of them."

"If I gave up all, what would I have to help them with?"

"Found homes, pensions, things like that with every cent you have, and then live among them, wear their clothes, eat their food, suffer their worries, endure their economies —"

"But that wouldn't help them any, my suffering."

"Your money would have helped a great many, and used rightly would always be a means of help, and your example, your love and good nature and cheer in troubles like their own, if you *could* be good-natured and cheerful, would help them. They would confide in you, bring you their troubles as they bring them to one another now. Your cleanliness in the same squalor they live in would impress them into following your example —"

"But, Reggie, that is absurd, perfectly absurd."

"No, it isn't, Helen. No more so now than it was nineteen hundred years ago."

"Nineteen hundred years ago?"

"Certainly. Remember what Christ said to the young man who wanted to go slumming? The young man thought it was absurd, just as you do, Helen. Yet you admire that verse in the Bible intensely. You never call it absurd."

' Helen was on the verge of tears. She knew if she spoke she would burst into sobs of vexation, so she said nothing, and Reggie, feeling that she was deeply impressed with his words and still full of the thoughts he had conjured up while waiting for her, finished his remarks in bland contentment, unconscious of the storm he was brewing.

"So don't you see, Helen, you are not frank? None of you wealthy philanthropists is or there would be no more need of any of you. You all want to help but you want to do it from your lofty pinnacle. I don't blame you, and I think you do a lot of good. All I claim is you ought to be frank about it, humbly admit just how far you are willing to go. You are all proud of yourselves, but not one of you is willing to go the whole cheese, to give your all and follow Him."

"But what would be the use of my being as poor as they are?" demanded the exasperated girl.

"I don't know, Helen, but there is use in it. It

is the best way to help or Christ would not have been born in a manger. You haven't faith, dear, to follow in His steps."

"Oh, Reggie, *you* preaching to *me!*"

Reggie turned in surprise at the outbreak of sheer exasperation. Helen's face was flushed and she was angry and annoyed. She was delightfully girlish in her frank human temper, no longer a reformer, simply a pretty, angry, brown-haired girl.

Reggie patted her hand and chuckled. "Jove, Helen, you are pretty."

"And you are abominable," said she, turning her head away.

"Take me to Kline's," said she as they turned into Broadway. "I want to buy my children some Christmas presents, for I do make them happy, even if you think I don't."

"I know you do, dear," protested Reggie. "All I say is, be frank about it and admit you think that verse in the Bible is absurd."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STATE OF MATRIMONY

THEY went to the big store and chose presents of every kind and description for big and little and middle-sized children. They bought tops and dolls, engines and games.

"Could I do this if I gave away all I have?" Helen asked him with a teasing laugh as they returned to the car and started home.

"No," said Reggie, "but you could give them more. You could give them the privilege of giving to you, you could give them the blessed joy of giving. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

"Reggie!" she protested, half laughing, half vexed.

"Do you know why I asked you to take me home this evening?" she asked after a moment.

"No, tell me."

"I wanted to ask you to — er — Why, Timothy certainly can not do you any good, Reggie. Don't you think you owe it to yourself not to be so intimate with him?"

"I may," admitted Reggie, not very much sur-

prised. He had been sure Helen would make this request of him sooner or later, and had never decided just what he would say in answer. "But what do I owe to him?"

"Do you owe him anything?"

"Don't we all owe one another something? Our help, our friendship—"

Helen flushed and looked sharply at him. "Reggie, you are insufferable. I wish I knew whether you really mean what you say or whether you, like another, can also quote Scripture."

"What I say is unanswerable," declared Reggie.

"But do you really mean it, really believe it?"

"I think it. We are all too selfish, Helen, to mean any of the Bible. We translate it to fit our desires."

"I wish you were as good as you talk, then I wouldn't worry over you so. If you owe Timothy something, you owe me more. Please, Reggie. You know that your longing to drink is terribly strong. Why encourage it by the companionship of a man who does drink?"

"I can't let him go, Helen. Let's not talk about it. He is fond of me and I of him."

"But it is so foolish in you. Why don't you acknowledge your weakness and protect yourself as much as possible?"

" You do not understand, Helen."

" I do. Please don't say that. I do understand. I don't mean to be horrid, Reggie, but I like you. We have been friends so long. Doesn't my friendship count for something? Isn't my claim prior to his? If you knew I had the morphine habit, not badly, so lightly that I was slowly breaking myself of it, wouldn't you hate to have me go with people who had the habit beyond help? Wouldn't you want me to help myself as much as possible? Now wouldn't you, Reggie? Be honest!"

" Yes, I would, Helen."

" Then give him up. You could get your mother to stay with you for a while and Timothy will leave. You could be friends just the same and help him just the same, but simply not be so intimate as—"

" Father and son," suggested Reggie.

Helen nodded quickly. " Yes, that is what I mean. Like father, like son, you know."

" But we are not father and son."

" Then why live as if you were?"

" It hasn't harmed me, has it? You said I was looking better."

" You are, Reggie, and you are making a fine fight. I have heard how you go to business every morning and hardly touch a thing now. But why

doom yourself to ultimate defeat? That desire of yours may be subdued for a while, but it will come back when you are constantly in the neighborhood where you have liquor always on hand. Timothy probably takes a great deal for dinner —”

“ No, he doesn’t. We never have a drop any more. We haven’t had any for about a month.”

“ At dinner —”

“ We haven’t a drop in the house, Helen. We can’t have any at dinner.”

“ Not a drop in the house? No wine? No whisky?”

“ I emptied the wine-cellar a month ago. We are teetotes.”

“ But, Reggie, that’s absurd. Why, I never heard of not having any in the house! Why, what will you do if you give a dinner?”

“ A dinner shouldn’t be dependent upon wine, dear.”

“ No, of course not. But it seems so — absurd, so drastic.”

“ Helen, how illogical you are. You want me to have mother with me to keep me sober, and she always has wine for dinner, and yet you don’t want me to throw away my wine and be done with it.”

“ No, no, Reggie. I thought your mother would

take so much less than Timothy would naturally take that you wouldn't have reason to take so much. But, I think it was fine in you, throwing it all away. I do, indeed. It just seemed so startling, I was surprised."

She mused a while in silence, then she laughed suddenly, with a tender catch in her voice. "Oh, Reggie, you are so young, still! You do such delightfully boyish things."

She leaned toward him in the shelter of the limousine and patted his hand gently. "It was fine, but why not complete the good work and not have Timothy always around?"

"I am fond of him, dear."

"And I am fond of you, Reggie. Please!"

Her voice fell. Her eyes, so soft and brown and earnest, gazed straight into his. Reggie felt a sudden throb of longing to take her into his arms and kiss her red mouth, but restrained himself, remembering past rebuffs. She was kinder than she had been to him for several years, but he must go slowly, he told himself. He must not risk her final complete surrender which he began now to hope for, by too much haste, by a premature declaration of that love she had refused so often. He could not give up Timothy, and neither did he care to anger

Helen again. He must have time. In a little while she would see that Timothy helped him, not otherwise.

"Give me time, dear," he pleaded. "Let me think about it. We have been together so long now."

"Yes, of course," she agreed readily. "You can't do it right off — as you emptied the wine-cellar."

It was Christmas Eve, raw and cold, with a sharp wind from the sea that cut through one like a knife. Great rolling clouds scurried by overhead, now hiding the moon, now revealing it, with occasional flurries of snow that left a thin crisp covering on roofs and fences and in sheltered corners where the feet of pedestrians could not trample it into a mire.

In the oak-paneled dining-room of Windemere, at a small table just big enough for two, Betsy Boggs and Timothy Payne smiled happily at each other and drank gaily to the season. There was a huge fire crackling and sputtering on the hearth, holly-berries and evergreen hung from walls and pictures in great festoons of red and green, and the air was heavy with the scent of pine and fir. The only light was from the fire and the shaded candles on the table.

Reggie's mother was in soft gray silk, her dainty

lace cap being caught in place by a sprig of mistletoe. She looked in the light of the dancing flames older and yet younger than when Timothy had first met her nearly two months before. Her hair, no longer tenderly watched and dyed to keep its girlish color, was fast turning its natural gray. The careful vigilant search for wrinkles having been likewise abandoned, the artificially youthful complexion was changing to the healthy wrinkles and pallor of her years. Fine lines could be seen at the corners of her whimsical old mouth and twinkling, shrewd old eyes. She stooped a bit with the frank pleasure of relaxation, the lack of necessity for continual erectness and sprightly steps. For all these visible signs of the years, the weariness of the ineffectual fight against time was leaving her. Her eyes were no longer tired and unanimated. They twinkled now with the joy of age. Her mouth turned up unconsciously at the corners, and the joyous spirit of her younger years, before she had gone into the bondage of masseuse and maid, seemed to have returned. The faint tinge in her cheeks was natural now and came and went with the charming inconsequence of her girlhood blushes.

Across the table, Timothy in dress suit, white tie and faultlessly brushed hair, a sprig of holly in his buttonhole, watched the winsome face with frank

admiration, forgetful of everything but himself and her, the cozy room and the season's mirth. And there in the dancing firelight, the two old people drank to each other in tall glasses of sweet cider.

"And how is our friend, Henrietta?" asked Reggie's mother, pursing up her lips and glancing aslant at Timothy with sharp old eyes.

"Angry, I suppose," said Timothy. "She invited Reggie and me to dinner to-night, to go to the Abbingtons' ball afterward, and we both had 'previous engagements.'"

"Where did Reggie go?"

"To the Maynards'."

"And you came here. Why did you do that?" She refused, as all women will, to take a man's unspoken but clearly demonstrated preference for granted, wanting to have it put into words.

"Shall we drink to my reason?" asked Timothy, raising his glass and smiling at her across the table.

"We have drunk that toast already," said she, and they both laughed.

"But Henrietta is terribly fond of you, Timothy. I know, for I still hear gossip. She has her eye on you."

Timothy was frankly uninterested in Henrietta. "Pish, she's married," said he and waved the sub-

ject aside. He had more important things to talk about that night.

"The state of matrimony is bounded on all four sides by Reno, Nevada, and it is easy enough to cross the line," persisted Reggie's mother, not yet appeased. "She isn't happy with her husband, Timothy. He doesn't understand her."

"Naturally. It is almost unbelievable, the modern woman's sublime belief in her own superlative worth," returned Timothy carelessly, his thoughts on the more important subject of Betsy Boggs, her bright eyes, her half absurd, half winning way of putting her small lace-crowned head on one side like an interrogative pup with one ear cocked. "They won't cook or sew or spin, and refuse absolutely to bear children. And some of them, dear lady, are so pitifully commonplace and ordinary for all their ancestors and money and yet so superbly unaware of the fact."

"Ah, don't," whispered Betsy Boggs, raising her napkin to her lips. "You hurt."

"Hurt?" Timothy's eyes were soft and tender. He leaned forward, all contrition. "But I wasn't talking about you, Betsy. Don't you know it? You are — you."

Betsy shook her head. "I am one of them. I used to think my just being alive was compensation

enough for any man to work twenty-four hours a day for me."

"It was," vowed Timothy.

"No, it wasn't. I remember things," she added and turned her gaze a moment into the deep heart of the fire.

She remembered the day when, five years married, her husband asked her with the boorish bluntness he later became notorious for if she did not think it was time she paid him for marrying her and gave him at least one child.

"I need some recompense," he had said, irritated by the sublime egotism of even such a fascinating parasite as Betsy Boggs.

So she had given him Reggie and he had been fond of the boy in his way. She remembered the second child that would have been born but for her not wanting it, and wondered whether it would have been a girl with her yellow hair, the father's bluntness, or another boy, strong or weak, clever, or perhaps stupid. It seemed to her for the first time since that long-ago day that she had killed a little child with her own hands.

She blinked into the fire, her eyes dimmed by a sudden rush of tears for the baby that should have been born. Then, before Timothy was more than aware of her silence, she shrugged the past aside

with its vain regrets. The years had dulled her sense of guilt and she had never cultivated the habit of remorse and introspection. To-night was Christmas Eve, the past was past. Let it go.

"You are a good-looking man, Timothy Payne," said she gaily, sipping her cider, with merry eyes on his face. "It would be perfectly natural and not at all foolish if you went courting again."

"I am courting," said Timothy.

"Whom?" said she.

"You," said Timothy.

She flushed and laughed. "An old woman, Timothy Payne?"

"And an old man, Betsy Pratt," reaching across the table and laying his hand on hers softly, his fingers closing gently over it. "Will you marry me?"

For a moment she hesitated, then she laid her other hand gently on his and shook her head. "Tell me first, Timothy, are you rich?"

"Two years ago I came into possession of the income from a trust fund. I only need to live on a quarter of it, it is so much. The rest I have invested and it is doing well. The investments are all my own and in a year or two will bring me an income of ten thousand a year. Then I shall refuse to touch that from the trust. I have enough, dear

lady." Timothy had grown very white as he told, with an odd mingling of shame and pride, of how well he had done with what he still considered Reggie's temporary loan.

He knew that if he married, he would not be deserting Reggie. Reggie wanted to marry himself and Timothy feared that he might be rather an obstacle than otherwise, for Reggie would worry lest he himself was deserting Timothy. As to Betsy Pratt, Timothy imagined from her quiet life and small estate with the two-story bungalow instead of the usual stately palace of those of Reggie's class, that she had no more than he did and that he could not be accused of marrying for money even by Willie and Monty. He knew he drank, but he knew also that he was growing old and that his drunks were as Dobbins had said, sober affairs, soon over, and that he had enough restraint never to drink to excess in Betsy's presence. Besides, drinking had been a gentleman's prerogative in the days when he was young.

Betsy saw in his deep-set eyes the wounded look like that of some hurt dog and knew the reason for it. She gently patted the hand that had tightened over hers as Timothy told her so eagerly how well he had done. But she shook her head.

" You have too much," said she.

"Too much?"

"Yes, indeed. Money is like cotton wool. It wraps you around and stifles you. Timothy, if you had nothing at all, I would marry you."

"I wouldn't marry you, dear lady, on nothing at all," laughed Timothy, the color creeping into his face again and the wounded look leaving his eyes.

"Ah, but listen," she begged, pushing aside her plate and resting her elbows on the table. "We would go into the country and buy an old-fashioned farmhouse just outside of a village, somewhere in New England where the snow is deep in winter and we, just you and I, could go out in the cutter, behind the family horse. I've been thinking," she rushed on, "how lovely it would be. We would begin to live then, Timothy. I never have lived, I have missed the best of everything for nothing has ever been required of me — except once, and then I was young and became angry because I did not understand. But I do now, Timothy. Don't you see how it would be? We would have cows and chickens and pigs and sheep. We would be so interested in them all because they would be our life. My life has been sitting still and letting others have all the fun. A nurse, a tutor, brought up my little boy, a foreman runs this place. I could leave tomorrow for a trip and things would go on just the

same. I am not needed. I have been usurped by my money. Don't you see? If we both gave all our money away and ran our own farm, we would be living. I would be so interested in the new little pigs and the number of eggs the hens laid, and the baby lambs in the spring. And in winter when the snow was deep, we would be so cozy, Timothy, in our great warm farmhouse, just you and I and a cat and a dog. Will you give all your money away for me, Timothy, and you and I begin again? We could pretend we had been so always, that the children had grown up, married and left us to ourselves."

"We can do it better with money," said Timothy.

"Ah, no. Don't you see? That has been the trouble all my life, money."

"Lack of it is a greater trouble, Betsy."

"But we wouldn't lack it. We would have all we needed from the farm. We would raise our own vegetables and apples and I would put up preserves."

CHAPTER XIX

MUCH ADO ABOUT MONEY

“**Y**ES, dear, but money wouldn’t stop all that,” explained Timothy gently. “We would have to have some anyway with which to buy the farm —”

“Yes, I know. I am not a fool. We would keep five thousand dollars. With that we could buy a place and stock it —”

“We wouldn’t have to touch the rest of our money, once we got settled,” said Timothy. “It would be the same as if we didn’t have much.”

“No it wouldn’t, no it wouldn’t.” The little old lady clasped her hands earnestly and leaned eagerly forward. “You don’t know what you are talking about. Really, money is an awful temptation. When you have it, you say you won’t spend it, but you do, for this and that. Then, too, all the pleasure would be gone from the farm. We would be just as we are now. It wouldn’t matter whether crops failed or not. All the excitement, all the incentive would be gone. We would end by raising animals for show, blue ribbon thoroughbreds for

others to look at and envy us for. That's all, and I am so tired of that. Too much money is a curse, Timothy, just as well as too little. It puts you in a glass case and keeps you there and you don't know it, except once in a long time, as I do. Timothy, I am tired of money, tired, tired, tired."

"Dear," said Timothy gently, "you do not know what it means to have none."

"I do, Timothy, I do. Poverty is terrible, unspeakable, I do know. But just enough, that is what I want, and the chance to earn it."

"And to be sure we will always have that 'just enough,' let's keep our money. We need not touch it."

"You do not love me."

"Dear, I love you too much."

The old lady grunted. "I will marry you, Timothy, if we can be poor."

"We can pretend —"

"Oh, damn, Timothy!"

She rose from her chair and marched into the study with a toss of her head and a flirt of her skirts in pure girlish pique which she would never outgrow. Timothy, amused, followed her. Two great chairs were drawn up before the open fire. Beside one was a small table with cigars, pipe and tobacco, beside the other a quaint old-fashioned

work-stand of highly polished, gold-inlaid mahogany. As in the dining-room, walls and pictures were draped with holly and pine and spruce and the only light was from the flames on the hearth and from candles on the mantle. The old lady opened her dainty, richly appointed work table and glanced across the intervening space at Timothy.

"I dare say you think this is beautiful," said she, tapping the cover.

"It is," said Timothy.

"It took me just an hour to choose it. Now if we had been married and lived on a farm, you would have made me one, Timothy, when it rained or snowed and you couldn't go out. It would have taken you three or four days, and while you were making it, you would be so interested. A person can't help but become interested in what they make with their hands, no matter how intellectual they are. Just think, one hour out of three days killed! Now, what are we to do with the rest of that time? How can we kill it? Don't you see, Timothy, that is what money does? Deprives us of the means of passing our time happily. So time hangs heavily and more heavily."

"You can cultivate your—"

"I'm ashamed of you, Timothy Payne. That hackneyed, worn-out sophistry! There isn't one of

us that isn't seventy-five per cent. more physical than intellectual. Beautiful pictures and great books are all right in their places, but they do not satisfy completely. It is only the things you do yourself that make you contented and complete, as it were, no matter whether you paint, or write, or simply cook and do farming. You must *do* things or life grows stale before we are half through with it, even if you do no more than make your wife a sewing table, or she makes you a muffler. The doing of it is what counts."

"We can do those things for each other if we have money."

"No, we can't. You think when you can give her you love a prettier table by buying it, why not buy it? She is worthy of the best. And out you go, spend an hour buying something made by other hands, depriving yourself of three days of pleasure."

"When you have nothing, you do not think about making your wife a sewing table," contended Timothy. "You think about making enough to pay the rent —"

"When you own your own home —"

"The mortgage, then. You are afraid you won't be able to make it. The thought worries you, oppresses you. You become irritable. You are

straining every nerve, every ounce of brain power to raise the needed money and you can't do it. It is hopeless, useless. Your wife sees by your face you can't make it. She becomes worried, too, harassed, nervous. Neither of you think of sewing tables. You can't. You haven't the time or the mental strength."

"That is the extreme, Timothy," protested Reggie's mother. "When you know you have enough to pay the rent or the mortgage —"

"Then why not keep our money so we will know it?"

Timothy knocked the ashes from the end of his cigar and leaned back in his chair, ruffled, feeling that he had clenched the argument, but knowing that she would not think so.

Betsy Boggs unwrapped the work she held in her lap and began to knit with firmly compressed lips and a knotted brow. Both old faces were flushed and grimly stubborn. The beautiful room, warm and Christmas-scented, was very quiet save for the crackle of the fire and the monotonous tick, tick of the stately clock in the corner. A candle guttered and Timothy rose and snuffed it with a pair of old-fashioned snuffers on a tray on the mantle.

"Do you know what I am making?" asked Betsy as he returned to his chair and glanced at her

nervously, wondering what she was thinking, she was silent so long.

"No," said he, looking at the square of knitted wool she held up for his inspection.

"I am knitting you a muffler. It looks square, but it is really going to be oblong, very long and narrow, you know. I never knew how to knit, but I learned after I met you and determined to grow old."

"Dear," protested Timothy, overcome. "It is the most beautiful thing I ever saw."

"Do you remember that first day we met and buried the fox? I was never old before that day. I was sixty, looked like forty and dressed like thirty, one of those gay and giddy damn-fools, Timothy. But I was sick of it, so tired, so terribly tired all the time. You see I had done the same things over and over all the days of my life. I bought this place so I could come to it once in a while, and escape from the other fools like me, and be old, and look it. My maid was horror-struck, miserable. If you give in for just one day, Timothy, in your fight against wrinkles and gray hairs, it is almost impossible to catch up again. But I only did it once in a long, long time, and that day I met you was one of the times. I have never been young since."

She wrinkled up her eyes and nodded gaily. Timothy laughed.

" Didn't I tell you you will never grow old? " he asked.

" I do feel younger and that's a fact, " she admitted, dropping a stitch and puckering her mouth earnestly in her silent struggles to reclaim it. The feat accomplished, she sighed contentedly. " I am never tired now, Timothy."

" And I will never let you be."

" Then give away all our money. It is that that tires me."

" No money would kill you."

" Timothy, do you know why I am knitting this muffler? " and she glanced at him as she had a way of doing, her head on one side like an intelligent pup's.

" So I can wear it."

" But only in one place. In a cutter with me, driving along some country road, going to our home."

" Then the sooner we are married, the better, dear."

" I will not marry a man with money."

" Without money, I can not ask you to be my wife."

" You can't have this muffler, otherwise," said she.

" I can't bring trouble on you as the price of a muffler, no matter how beautiful."

Again they fell silent, while the fire crackled and sputtered, the clock ticked on and on, and the wind, moaning around the chimney corners, brought with it the sound of church bells ringing the Nativity.

As Timothy rose to leave, the little old lady followed him into the hall. She had long ago dismissed her servants for the night and the holly-trimmed hall was empty. At the door, Timothy caught her hands.

" Dear," he begged, " we would be so happy together."

" I know, I know," she answered and seemed for a moment to waver as she stood with her hands in his. " But — I am afraid of money, Timothy. It will come between us."

" I am afraid of poverty, dear."

" Oh, Timothy, once in my life I want the pleasure of not being able to afford something I really want."

" It's a pleasure that soon changes, dear."

" You don't love me, Timothy."

" I love you too much. Marry me and we will rise above our money."

But she shook her head. "We can't," she wailed. "I know."

January came and went. Backed by Reggie's name and financial influence, affairs were going well with Timothy: He was making more and more every day: He imagined now from words Betsy let fall that she was richer than he had at first thought and he was determined to have a fortune equal to hers. But the more money he made, the more immovable became Betsy. The two had come to a deadlock and neither would give in.

"If you were poor, Timothy, I would marry you."

"If I were poor, Betsy, I would not ask you to."

Thus began and ended their many long arguments. The old lady would flush a delicate pink and pucker her smooth brow and purse up her lips in frank disregard for wrinkles, and the old gentleman would shut his mouth with grim determination and obstinacy. Timothy knew he was right, and the little old lady didn't care whether she were or not.

Early in February, Timothy heard through Mary Fisher that Mrs. Russell was sick. The long hard years of poverty had taken their dole of strength. Help had come too late. The old woman

had broken down entirely now that the necessity for keeping up had been removed. Her worn-out nerves had given way and she had slowly collapsed. Timothy had a doctor called and did everything for her he possibly could. But there was nothing that could be done. Rest had come too late and late that month she died. It was a pitiful death. She didn't want to die. She was comparatively young, no older than Reggie's care-free irresponsible mother, but where one had had more than plenty, the other had not had enough. The doctor signed the death certificate as heart failure, due to nervous collapse, but Mary Fisher smiled grimly as she read it.

"Heart failure," she repeated bitterly to Timothy the day of the funeral, as they sat in the warm sitting-room of the farmhouse after they had returned from the cemetery and the last of the kindly neighbors had gone. "She died of trouble. The burden was tons too heavy for the back."

"Has it been so hard for you all living here?" asked Timothy. "I tried to make it easy."

"Timothy, it was Heaven, but it came too late. She was worn out before we came here and only kept up through sheer pluck. She did take pleasure in planning this place, but not so much as she thought she was going to. She didn't know why

not, but she had thought too much in the past. Her mind was worn out. She couldn't think or plan any more, even nice things."

The country had done a great deal for Mary Fisher. She looked well and happy. Her soft hair was taken care of now that she had the time and was not always so tired, and it was prettily arranged low over her forehead, making her look younger than the gaunt worried woman Timothy had known. Annie had scorned the rural calm after two weeks and had returned to the crowded dirty city. Even the fear of death could not crush her longing for the lights and smells and sounds that owned her, body and soul. In Mary Fisher's loving care, the baby had blossomed and grown. Though still a baby with a baby's impersonal curves and fat little features, it already looked like Annie, as a poor little yellow cur of the gutter, no matter how tenderly reared, can never be mistaken for a dog of high degree.

"They say the back can always bear the burden, that God would not let it be otherwise, but that is sophistry, Timothy," and she looked at him across the baby's head cuddled on her shoulder as he sat on the other side of the great warm stove.

He nodded regretfully. "I should have done more. What was I thinking of?"

" You did all you could, but it was done too late, that is all. You couldn't help that."

That evening, the minister, John McAlister, called and the three sat around the stove and chatted. John McAlister owned a large farm, and was a big, gentle, kind-hearted man, but more interested in his four-legged flock than in his two-legged one. Timothy was bored and tired, but feeling that the visit was one of courtesy to himself, stifled his yawns and tried to appear interested. When the visitor finally rose to go, Mary Fisher followed him into the hall and quietly shut the sitting-room door behind her. Some two hours later, Timothy, who had gone to bed without waiting for Mary to come back to bid her good night, was awakened by the sound of departing sleigh-bells. A great light broke on him. He chuckled as he drew up the bedclothes and cowered lower in the warm bed. So that was why the minister had stayed so long, eh?

Timothy felt reluctant about suggesting that Mary have some one to stay with her. The suggestion, diffidently brought forth next morning was promptly brushed aside, as Timothy knew it would be. Miss Fisher was contented alone with the child, and feeling that she would not be alone long, Timothy did not press the subject.

With the pity of his old friend's death still fresh,

he went at once to his Betsy and laid the case before her.

"Suppose something should happen to me," said he. "You would be left all alone on the farm, poor like my friend."

"That would give such a zest to life, Timothy, that fear," returned Reggie's mother plaintively. "Don't you see that then there would always be excitement?"

Timothy had found her in the great glass room just off the library. Her cap was askew, she had on a long checked apron and her hair was distinctly mussed, while a smut of dust disfigured one flushed cheek. She was dusting and met him at the door with the duster still in her hand.

"I have swept this whole room and dusted it," she explained. "What is the use of having a room if you can't take care of it? Do I look mussed? I hope I do. I am so tired of being beautifully dressed. A certain personal neatness and pretty clothes are all right, but people are overdoing the dress habit, Timothy. We think too much of it nowadays. All my life I have tried to be beautiful, and what was the use of it?"

"But because you are rich, that shouldn't prevent your doing things," expostulated Timothy, exasperated.

"What things?" and she questioned him with her head on one side.

"Why charity—"

"I could endow a college with two million dollars and wouldn't know that I had given anything away. That isn't giving. If you had a hundred bushels of apples, and gave one apple away, you wouldn't feel very generous, that you had given much."

"You don't have to touch your money," pleaded Timothy. "You can cook and sweep just as if you didn't have a cent."

"That is foolish. All the time I would be conscious of the millions steadily multiplying, like a child playing bear in the nursery, conscious all the time that the bear is its nurse and won't really bite."

"Poverty doesn't teach you to grow up," sputtered Timothy. "It makes you cold, hard—"

"It hasn't made you so, Timothy."

"It has, dear, it has. Deep down it always leaves its marks. I am not so fine, so fastidious —"

"Finicky."

"No, no, fastidious, reserved, as I would have been if I had not suffered poverty. I have done things, dear, that I can not bear to think of, things that in their way are all right and had to be done, but things that coarsen one unconsciously."

"Broaden, Timothy. You do not look at things rightly. All men are friends of yours because you have lived among them. Your friendship is not limited to the few with money — neither was Christ's."

CHAPTER XX

BACK TO THE FOLD

“**I**HAVE washed dishes, dear,” confessed Timothy, “in a low restaurant, for my meals.”

“So now you can’t order a meal with the blankness of a man speaking to an automaton as the wealthy do. The waiters aren’t automatons to you. They are men as the good God made them.”

“You can look on them as men even if you have money.”

“You may want to but you can’t. You don’t understand, not if you have had money all your life.”

“I can not marry you if I am poor,” declared Timothy desperately.

“I can not marry you if you are rich.”

He looked at the foolish, stubborn old lady, with her cap all askew, and his heart softened as it always did. “I must go,” said he. “I am head over ears in business. My capital is growing steadily.”

“You care for it more than you do for me.”

“No, I care for it, because of you.”

He kissed her hand gaily and hurried away.

He went to his office and there Reggie came for him to take him home. Reggie's eyes had an odd twinkle in them, half of shame, half pleasure. Timothy lay back in his chair and looked quizzically at him.

"Well?" said he.

"Well?" said Reggie.

"What is it?"

"What is what?"

The secretary entered with some letters to be signed. Timothy took them and dismissed the girl for the night. She went out and Reggie laughed.

"How did you know something had happened?" he asked.

"By your face," said Timothy, blotting a signature.

"I hope I don't carry my feelings as plainly as that for all to read."

"No. I am the only one you give a chance to read them. Well, what is it?"

Reggie tossed an envelope on the table and Timothy opened it and read the enclosed note. It was from the club that had dropped Reggie's name two years before. It was a brief apology, stating that at a meeting of the governors, it had been decided that his name had been dropped under a misunder-

standing. The trust was expressed that he would take his old place as though nothing had happened.

Timothy read the note slowly and Reggie watched him, slightly flushed. When he had finished he glanced up and his eyes rested kindly on the young man.

"You have vindicated yourself, Reggie," said he.

"They kicked me out when I needed friends," said Reggie slowly, picking up the note and slipping it back in the envelope. He frowned but Timothy knew that he was pleased and in a way touched.

"'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,'" quoted the old man.

"Would you do that, if I offended you?" demanded Reggie.

"You plucked me in and I have been plucking you ever since," protested Timothy, with the mingling of shame he always felt when he thought of how much Reggie had done for him.

They looked straight into each others' eyes, a long tender glance, and Reggie laughed, his hand on the old man's shoulder tightening a moment, as he raised his eyes to gaze out of the window over the countless roofs and chimney stacks to the distant heights of Brooklyn.

Reggie met Helen that night at the O'Briens' but

said nothing of the letter reinstating him. He disliked being rejoiced over as a wanderer returned to the fold and Helen could do that to perfection as he realized only too well, much as he loved the girl. Reggie was asked to take Helen in to dinner, for Molly O'Brien was a good-hearted little soul and loved match-making as much as did her Irish grandmother in the hut in the "ould counthry." Helen laid her hand on Reggie's arm and whispered gently.

"Reggie, I know."

"Know what?" asked Reggie with a bit of a flush.

Their eyes met in a steady glance and Reggie knew that she had heard about the note. There was not time for more until soup was served, then Reggie turned to her gravely.

"If I am pleased it is because of you, Helen," said he.

"I wish it had happened because of me," said she, feeling again that reproach of her conscience that she had left him when he needed her most. If she could only assure herself that it was because she had left him that he had pulled himself up, her action would be vindicated and her self-esteem redoubled. She was all softness and sweetness, glancing at him in frank admiration. It went to Reggie's head. He had waited so long for her yielding that

now that it had come, he felt suddenly timid and abashed.

"It did, dear," he vowed. "Everything I do and am is because of you."

"I left you—"

"For my good."

She flushed quickly and looked at him, her eyes filled with hope and joy. Reggie looked straight back without the flicker of an eyelash to prove that he had lied. She believed him and happy tears sprang to her eyes. She laughed and turned hastily to her other neighbor to hide them.

When she turned to him again, he whispered as though they were discussing nothing more serious than the weather:

"I love you, dear."

She nodded. "And I you."

"Helen, will you?" His voice had fallen so low the girl could hardly catch the quick tremulous words.

"Yes," she answered softly, and in her eyes he read the joy of woman's final surrender.

Timothy was sympathizing with Mrs. McBride on one side about he knew not, explaining his views of life to Molly O'Brien on the other and meanwhile, unintentionally drinking more than he usually

did. Mrs. McBride had nothing whatever of vital importance in life to do, so she thought constantly of herself and was necessarily unhappy. Filled with the idea of her own worth and her divine right to be happy, her sense of justice was outraged when she came to the conclusion that she was not. Timothy listened to her pitiful confidences with the gentle courtesy with which he listened to all tales of woe, real or fancied, offering consolation full and free. Henrietta McBride's foolish heart had grown wonderfully soft toward the old gentleman and her empty head became filled with ideas as wild and exaggerated as were those of her own worth. Timothy was not too old to be beyond a woman's dreams, and since that day of the hunt, Henrietta had allowed herself to dream. And the more she dreamed the harder it was to stop, until finally she didn't want to stop. So, she had let her thoughts run riot, and now she gazed at him with an expression that would have disgusted and annoyed Betsy Boggs could she have seen it.

"Mr. Payne, do you not sometimes feel that there is more in these stories about affinities one reads in the papers than people think?"

Timothy turned from explaining to Molly O'Brien that one does not need brains nowadays if one but

subscribes to the modern magazines for women and does everything according to their counsel, and regarded Henrietta with grave courtesy.

"How is that?" he asked.

"Haven't you ever met a person for the first time and realized in a glance that you are old friends though you have never met before, that you like each other because you always have? Have you never felt that sudden, quick, unaccountable intimacy?"

"Yes, I believe every one has. It does seem odd," agreed Timothy.

"Then do you not see that there is more in this newspaper talk than one is willing to admit?"

"But some seem to have so many affinities," expostulated Timothy.

"I know. They are foolish, silly. But at the bottom there is a grain of truth. There is such a thing as a true affinity, and many, many of us who never allow ourselves to get in the papers, have that one true affinity."

Timothy sought for a discreet answer in a long drink of wine, but before he found it, Molly O'Brien broke in with her principal complaint.

"Mr. Payne, why is it one might much better be dead than a nouveau riche?"

"I do not know," said Timothy, turning to the

girl with relief. "Unless," he added unfortunately, thinking of Mrs. McBride, "because the dead are quiet."

By the time he had made peace with his hostess for his unfortunate and unusual break, the dinner was over and the ladies were rising from the table. Molly O'Brien's dinners were always the epitome of formality, for Molly dared not have them otherwise. Helen and Reggie, with the Abbingtons and young Elliot, went together in Reggie's car to a dance in the wilds of Brooklyn, and Reggie had to stifle his longing to take the girl in his arms and bury his face in that soft brown hair he had hardly dared to touch. Unseen pressures of the hand and surreptitious glances were not satisfying and he suggested to Helen after the third dance that they leave. He knew the Abbingtons would not care to return so early and he and Helen would have the long ride home alone in the limousine. Helen, too, quite frankly wanted to be alone with her love. The long siege was over and she wanted to surrender completely. She had repressed her natural longings so many years that when the flood-gates once opened, it was almost impossible to close them again. So the girl went up-stairs to get her wraps and Reggie waited, ecstatically happy, in the hall below.

Helen returned and behind her, ready to leave, tripped Henrietta McBride. Reggie met them at the head of the stairs and Helen paused a moment, laying her hand on his arm, her eyes dumbly asking his pardon and expressing her own regret.

"Henrietta has a headache, Reggie," said the girl. "I told her we would be glad to take her home. Her people do not want to leave yet."

"Certainly," declared Reggie blankly. "We shall be delighted."

Helen thanked him with a little pat on the arm and a *moue* behind Henrietta's graceful back.

The night was fairly warm. The limousine with every window open was comfortable, the scent of the violets in the swinging vases, delicious. Helen unhooked her wrap and lay back in her corner, gazing happily out at the fascinating darkness of the sleepy city, her heart and mind at rest after many years, her soul at peace. Now and then she glanced at Reggie just in front of her, brooding over her with half-shut eyes in grim defiance of Henrietta's presence, and it seemed to her that she had reached home at last. But Henrietta was indifferent to her surroundings and companions. With eyes closed, she dreamed of Timothy and went over again word for word, the conversation that night at dinner. Timothy, she felt sure, cared

for her, or why was he so sympathetic? But he knew that she was a married woman, and he was an old-time gentleman and would face death rather than reveal what he felt for another man's wife. The idea thrilled Henrietta and she decided that it would not be too bold for her to show him that she understood and reciprocated, but that, like him, she realized it was hopeless — unless she grew too fond of him and he of her. And then there was always — Reno. She had tried to show him a little that night how she felt. Had she been too bold? Too timid?

The car rolled on the bridge and Reggie glanced at the dark ragged outline that was New York. It was late and the sky-scrapers were in almost complete darkness, save for an isolated light, twinkling here and there, high and low. He thought of Timothy and remembered that the old man had told him he was going to his office for a few moments that night to get some papers he had forgotten and which he wanted to go over again before a meeting scheduled for early in the morning. Helen raised her eyes from the myriad lights of the river beneath them and following his gaze wondered aloud who was working so late in the lonely buildings.

Henrietta opened her eyes and gazed eagerly,

tenderly at the tiny lights like pin-points in the mass of darkness. Timothy had an office in one of those buildings, she knew, overlooking the river, for he had told her so. Which one was it? Were any of those lights his? He had told her he was going to his office that night to get some papers. Her eyes still on the lights, she spoke to Reggie, as carelessly as she could, thankful that at Helen's wish they had ridden in the dark and her blushes would not be seen, unaware of the fact that Helen and Reggie were too hopelessly engrossed in themselves to notice anything amiss with her.

"Mr. Payne told me he had important papers he wished to look over to-night. One of those lights may be his."

"Shall we go and see?" asked Reggie, wondering if Timothy could not be bribed surreptitiously to take Henrietta the rest of the way home in his own car.

Henrietta stiffened with anticipation but said nothing. She, too, wondered if Timothy might not ask to be allowed to take her home, a childish hope, but Henrietta was quite frankly in love, hence more foolish than usual. Helen agreed at once, ready to-night to agree to anything Reggie proposed.

So, as they glided out from under the L station,

and the car turned at once toward Maiden Lane, Reggie planned how he could get Timothy to himself for a moment, Henrietta's pulse fluttered delightfully as she hoped Helen would not notice her too much, and Helen wondered if the elevator were running so late at night. Would they have to walk up those long stairs, and if so, and if Henrietta were allowed to get slightly in the lead — but that was silly and she blushed furiously, and trusted to the dark to hide her confusion from Henrietta.

Timothy's electric brougham stood before the entrance of the building and Reggie's heart lightened and his hopes mounted as he followed the ladies across the sidewalk.

The great massive doors were shut and as Reggie pulled at them, Helen glanced down the long, dark, narrow street, silent and uncanny in its quiet and desertion, and shivered at the strangeness and isolation of the night. She tipped back her head and let her eyes mount higher and higher up the mighty front of the building until it was lost in the gloom and obscurity of height, and again she shivered and drew nearer Reggie. The long stone corridors echoed eerily to the sound of their footfalls. The sight of the watchman was a relief in the vault-like place.

"I came to get Mr. Payne," explained Reggie,

"and the ladies came along to see a sky-scraper at night."

"It's a lot different from what it is in the day-time," agreed the man, touching his cap.

"Is Mr. Payne up-stairs, do you know?"

"Yes, sir, he is. He just came a few minutes ago."

Reggie nodded and led the way to the only elevator running so late.

Timothy had left Molly O'Brien's early, but on the way down-town had stopped at the club and remained longer than he intended, had a thoroughly good time and a glass or two with congenial friends. Though Timothy could not be said to be entirely sober as he let himself into his office, yet neither was he drunk. He was steady on his feet and knew perfectly well what he was about, still the voice with which he wished the elevator boy a jovial "Good night" was a trifle thick, and his breath was stronger than it should have been to have been able to prove an absolute alibi. He was standing by his desk, running hastily over a pile of papers, when Reggie knocked on the door and, sure that Timothy could have no visitor with whom he did not care to be interrupted, did not wait for permission to enter, but opened the door at once and stood aside to let the ladies pass. The sudden

draft created by the door and the window, open to the sultry night, blew a paper from the desk, whisked it around the chair-leg and under the desk. Timothy grabbed for it, missed it, and not waiting to see whether Reggie were alone or not, fell on his knees and groped blindly under the desk.

On the threshold, Helen, who was in the lead, paused, her cheeks growing red, her eyes opening wide and her mouth snapping shut with consternation and dismay. Reggie saw her start and glanced over her shoulder at Timothy on his knees under the desk, his back to the door, oblivious to everything but the lost paper. Reggie glanced at Helen, and his heart seemed to stop, then to race on furiously. Because Timothy was on his knees under the desk was no sign he was drunk. Helen was too hasty in her conclusions. He hurried past the women to Timothy.

"Hullo, Tim," said he with forced carelessness. "You have some very late visitors. Get up and speak to them. What are you doing down there?"

Timothy had not seen that the visitors were women and thinking that Reggie had come up with some of the "boys," replied gaily from the seclusion of the desk, his voice unfortunately a bit too thick:

"I'm like Henrietta, Reggie. I am looking for my affinity."

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE SPRING

THE next morning at breakfast, Reggie told Timothy that he was engaged. Helen had at last consented.

"When is the happy day to be?" asked Timothy after the usual good wishes.

"Oh, not for a little time, yet, I am afraid," admitted Reggie, flushed and happily embarrassed. "Helen will have so much to do."

"Don't wait too long," advised Timothy. "Long engagements disillusion a man more effectually than marriage."

"A woman, you mean," corrected Reggie. "Ours won't be long, if I can help it. Why, Tim, I've loved and waited for that girl ever since I can remember!"

He glanced across the table proudly and Timothy's heart stirred as tenderly as though Van had been his own. He felt a vague fear that Helen was not worthy of the look he saw in the young man's eyes. Reggie had been through the mire, but he had come bravely and manfully out on the

other side, and Timothy, who knew his bringing-up and the money that had usurped his character, as Betsy had said, was proud of the boy.

"Whom did you bring up with you last night, Van?" he asked. "And what happened to them? What made them leave so hastily?"

Reggie chuckled, amused at the joke, and convinced that Timothy had been sober the night before. "They left immediately," said he. "You didn't even catch a glimpse of them, did you, Tim?"

"No. When I got up, they were gone and you were tearing after them. I wasn't drunk. Did they think I was because I was on my knees? I was looking for a paper that had just fallen to the floor."

"If they had stayed a moment, they would have seen you were steady enough," returned Reggie. "It was what you said that made them leave so hurriedly."

"What I said about the affinity?" asked Timothy with a twinkle in his deep-set eyes. "I surmise that one must have been Helen, but who was the other?"

"Henrietta!"

The two men lay back in their chairs and roared.

"Oh, lor'," gasped Timothy. "Henrietta!"

He made a special trip that day to Long Island

to tell his Betsy the joke. They had dinner and spent the evening together. Timothy said nothing about Reggie's engagement nor his own desire to marry. The little old lady waited and waited, but nothing happened. When he rose to go, she could stand the silence on that most important topic no longer.

"Have you changed your mind?" she asked.

"About what?" said he.

"About wanting to marry me," said she.

"No," said he, "I will never change. I have brought you some books to show you how to change."

Betsey opened the bundle of books he gave her and glanced at the titles, *How The Other Half Lives*, and *Out of Mulberry Street*. Then she shook her head and laid them aside.

"The poverty-stricken East Side isn't America," she declared. "It is a bit of Europe, that's all, and those peasants are happy down there in their own way, happier than the silly bunch on Fifth Avenue. What I want is good, clean, American country life, simple, without much money, the kind of life this country is founded on, Timothy, and that has made it so big and great. All the world is topsyturvy. The rich are to be pitied, not the wholesome poor."

"Dear," said Timothy, "you talk like the books in a Sunday-school library."

Reggie shut up shop early that day and went to get Helen, planning to take lunch down-town and then make for the country in a motor-car. The day was beautiful, warm and cloudless, an unexpected foretaste of spring in the midst of winter. The air was soft and sweet and intoxicating even in the city streets. People laughed for no reason, loosening the wraps around their throats and thinking vaguely of summer, where to go for the season, or for two short weeks as their financial status permitted. Office windows were opened and clerks dreamed over their work.

Reggie bought a great bunch of narcissus and daffodils, and taking the roadster so that he and Helen could be alone in the blessed peace of the country, without even the presence of a chauffeur, drove up-town. The bitterness of the last years of struggle was swept from his heart by the girl's surrender, as a spring freshet sweeps the tumbled wreckage of the winter aside and rushes on clean and dancing to the distant sea. His heart sang and his eyes smiled as well as his lips. He loved everybody, but he adored the dearest and best, and she loved him. He remembered with regret, which im-

mediately turned to pleasure at the thought of what was to come, that he had not yet taken her in his arms after that whispered "Yes" that had changed the world for him.

The house was bathed in sunshine as he ran up the marble steps to the great front door. Two stiff little trees, one on each side of the door, lent an air of quaintness to the stately entrance. The two little trees always amused Reggie as so typical of New York City's agriculture. As he stood waiting for his ring to be answered he wished he could present his floral offering free of the great box and silver wrappings that detracted from the perfection of the flowers. He decided he would unwrap them in the house and get rid of the box and paper somehow before Helen came down, put them under the divan or stuff them behind the piano, anywhere to have them out of sight.

Helen had been waiting for him and hurried down almost before he had time to accomplish his purpose and push the box behind the heavy brocaded curtains. He went to her as she hesitated in the doorway and laid the great bunch of spring flowers in her arms, leaning forward above them to kiss her. But she drew her head aside as a great tide of color flooded neck and cheeks and forehead.

It sank as Reggie drew back a moment, hurt and

surprised. But he still held her by her elbows and he noticed how white she had grown and that beneath her eyes were the dark rings of a sleepless worried night. Then eagerness brushed aside his momentary doubt and he laughed as he drew her, flowers and all, nearer with quiet determination to get what was his and what he had not yet claimed. But she was as determined as he and turned her head aside again so that his lips only brushed the dark hair above her ear.

"Don't, Reggie, please," she begged and he felt her stiffen away from him while once more a flood of color dyed her white face.

Then the old sickening fear rushed over Reggie and he drew back, his hands falling to his sides, his eyes full of reproach.

"Is anything the matter, dear?" he asked gently.

She buried her face in the flowers a moment to gain courage, then she raised her head and looked straight at him, her narrow mouth firmly closed, in her eyes the look he knew so well, the look of the reformer, of one who will not compromise with sin. She moved farther into the room. Her dress of green linen was close fitting and simple. A snood of the same color bound back the curly mass of her brown hair. She looked like a slip of a girl as she stood there, the great bunch of flowers in her arms,

not like a woman of thirty-two, save for the expression in her eyes and around her mouth.

"Reggie," said she gently. "I can not marry you unless you give up Timothy Payne."

"Helen!"

She laid the flowers on the table and raised her slim hands to her hair. For a moment she would not look at him and her bosom rose and fell. The pain in his voice had unnerved her, but in a moment she was mistress of herself again. She rested one hand on the table beside the flowers and looked straight into his eyes.

Reggie stared in dazed misery at the girl, then he threw back his head with a forced laugh and strove to believe she was fooling him.

"Helen, dearest, Timothy wasn't drunk last night. Was it that that has upset you?" He drew nearer to her and tried to take her hand, but she would not let him. "Why, sweetheart, he and I laughed so this morning over Henrietta and her affinity—"

"Laughed at the coarseness of a drunken fool," she cried, a sudden sickening doubt seizing her that perhaps he would not give the old man up even for her. The unconscious jealousy she had always felt for Timothy and his influence over Reggie filled her eyes with a quick rush of anger. Timothy had

come between her and Reggie. The old accusing question and doubt as to whether she had done right to desert Reggie when he needed her most was fiercely crushed down. She had been right. Her desertion had saved him, she told herself hotly, saved him, though the old man had done all he could to undo what she had done and drag Reggie down again into the mire. Timothy's companionship, she told herself over and over, was a constant menace to the man she loved. Last night proved it beyond question. But she would save her boy, free him from all danger. Reggie would not hesitate a moment now between her and this old man, picked up during some drunken revel in the slums. She was fighting for his soul, she told herself, and not being given to questioning herself or her motives, no twinge of conscience told her it was not Reggie's soul she was fighting for, but the peace of her own heart, conquered now, crushed beneath the weight of her jealousy. And Reggie, gazing into the sweet flushed face, never dreamed that his queen, his saint, was actuated by ordinary, every-day, very human jealousy, and not for a pretty youthful member of her own sex, but for an old man, gentle and loving and kindly. If she urged him to get rid of Timothy, it was because of her principles, Reggie thought. She probably believed that she

was doing it for his best good. She did not understand all that Timothy had done for him and was doing, that Timothy was not only no drawback, but a powerful means of help, drunk as well as sober. She thought in her goodness and purity and delightful girlish ignorance — for she, thank God, really knew nothing of the dark side of life, though she played at helping it — that Timothy was drunk the night before when he was not. It was all a mistake. So he told himself, and loved her the more for the prudery so few of the modern maidens he knew possessed.

Her gibe had brought the color into his face but he excused her because of her loyalty to her friend and replied gently:

“ He wasn’t drunk, Helen. He had taken some wine for dinner as all of us did. He wasn’t drunk.”

“ You men always stand up for one another.”

“ So do you women,” laughed Reggie, striving to brush aside her seriousness by laughing lightly himself. “ See how hurt you are because of what he said before Henrietta.”

“ Not at all. I was not thinking of Henrietta. I am not standing up for her. I am standing up for you, Reggie, trying to help you,” and her eyes were full of tears and gentle reproach.

“ You do help me, sweet. Get your things on

and come along. Spring is out, Helen, Pan and all his nymphs. I've got the car —”

“ Then, you give up Timothy for me? ”

“ I do not give up either of you, love. I just explained. Timothy was not drunk.”

“ He was, Reggie. I saw.”

“ Very well, dear, he was. I can't convince you of the truth that he was not, so we will argue on the proposition that he was. Why should I give him up? ”

“ He is a bad companion for you, Reggie. It is absurd your going with him when you can choose decent men.”

“ There is no one more decent than Timothy,” declared Reggie angrily. “ He pulled me up and put me on my feet again. If I make anything of myself, it will be because of Tim, God bless him.”

“ You said it was I who had saved you, Reggie.”

“ Don't talk about being saved, Helen. It irritates me.”

Helen flushed. She had not expected Reggie to become angry. He never had done so before, had never objected to the word “ saved.” Her first sickening fear that he would refuse to give up Timothy for her returned. Her jealousy grew and the more jealous she became, the higher flamed her anger.

"Very well," said she coldly. "If you do not like the word I will not use it. But why did you lie to me when you said it was I who had — pulled you up?"

"It wasn't exactly a lie, dear, I have always wanted to be better for your sake."

"Don't hedge, Reggie." Her voice was sharp with suppressed fear. "You said that my leaving you as I did was the thing that pulled you up."

"You wanted me to say it, Helen."

"I didn't want you to lie to me," she protested.

"I am sorry, dear."

"And you lied before —"

"I know. I told you I was seasick when I was really drunk. But that was before I was saved, so that lie doesn't count." He laughed gaily and shrugged his misdemeanors carelessly aside. "Get your hat and coat, dear. The morning is too beautiful to waste in useless talk like this."

"This isn't useless. You really can not care for me at all. I have no influence on your life, one way or the other."

"You have made me love you and you alone for years."

"You do not love me or you would do as I ask you now, and give up Timothy."

"Helen, be reasonable. When we are married, he won't live with us, won't want to."

"You will be friends, still, though."

"Yes, please God, for all our lives."

Helen flushed again and bit her lip, struggling to check the tears and keep her self-control. "His friendship is not good for you, Reggie," said she slowly, striving to be tactful. "He is too old ever to get over his desire for drink, and while he is your best friend, your chum, you will be constantly thrown with men who drink to excess."

"He doesn't drink now as he used, Helen. He was so poor he hardly had enough to eat and never enough to wear. He was cold all the time and the stuff warmed him—"

"Why didn't he spend the money for clothes, not drink?"

"He didn't have enough. You can get a drink of a certain kind of poison for a dime. You couldn't buy a coat with that."

"He could have saved!"

"He didn't have enough to save. It was either buy whisky or cheap food that wouldn't half feed him, wouldn't nourish him at all. The whisky made him feel fine for a while, any way, so he took it. Any one would have done the same. Besides,

friends would treat him to a drink but not to a hat or a pair of boots. Don't you see it was circumstances more than anything else? He hardly drinks at all now. He is doing fine in his business. Why, Helen, I never had any interest in my own money and business affairs until he came and took so much in his. I began to look up mine to see what pleasure he got out of it and now I handle all of my own. I used to have breakfast at any old time after twelve. I have it every morning now at eight and I like it. Timothy and I have gone into a number of business things together, and on Timothy's advice in the way of handling they have always turned out well. Why, Helen, sweet," with a gay laugh, "I couldn't drop him. Don't you see?"

"Yes. You can drop me with no fear of financial consequences."

"Helen!"

"I can not help it, Reggie. I have thought and thought about this. He is bad for you. You have too strong a desire to drink—"

"Yes," said Reggie grimly. "I have, I admit it. Right now I would give my immortal soul for one."

"Timothy is a sot, picked up from the gutter in a drunken brawl. You must choose between us."

"But, Helen, you never said this before. You have known of our friendship for a long time."

"I have. I asked you before Christmas to give him up. You said to give you time."

"Why didn't you say it again last night then, before you consented to marry me?"

"I had planned to make it a condition, but last night when you asked me, I cared so much, I love you so, I didn't think of anything but just that."

"Helen, sweetheart," he cried, stepping quickly to her and trying to take her in his arms. "Helen, beloved, I know. I love you the same. Don't think of anything but me. Tim's a good soul. As soon as we are married, he won't live with me, we won't be more than friends—"

"You prefer his friendship to my love."

Reggie's arms fell and he drew back, the eagerness sinking slowly from his eyes and flushed face. "What made you think of that this morning?" he asked drearily.

"Last night. He was drunk again. It was disgusting, disgraceful. Think of what he is, Reggie, and of what I am." Her voice broke in a strangled sob, half a wail of uncontrollable misery and fear that he did not love her as she thought. Her jealousy was tearing at her heart like a physical pain. He cared more for Timothy than he did for

her, that was all she thought now or cared about. All other issues were lost sight of in this tremendous one of testing his love. Her real concern earlier in the winter that Timothy was not a fit companion for her boy no longer entered into her calculations.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHOICE

REGGIE, white-faced, miserable, torn between loyalty to one more than friend and love for the girl, paced the floor in complete and hopeless inability to read the anguish of her woman's mind. Of course, he told himself, she was doing it for his good, but why would she not be convinced that Timothy's companionship was a help instead of a menace? He stopped before her, hands deep in his pockets. Neither thought or cared to be seated.

"Helen, let me explain why I took Timothy to live with me. He is, as you know, a gentleman, not an East Side bum. You could tell that anywhere, under any circumstances. I knew it the first time we met when we were both half seas over. It seemed to me he was myself. I was looking in a glass thirty years hence and seeing my own reflection, poor, drunk, deserted, penniless, an outcast. It was the shock, Helen, that brought me to my feet. The awful repulsion of the thing shook me into a desire to be sober, to have a different end from what his was likely to be. I got him down to

the yacht with some such idea as that, drunk as I was. You know how you all left me. During the months Timothy and I cruised around, I grew more fond of him than I ever was of my own father. Well, we parted, and I went down hill so fast you couldn't see me." The girl winced, mistaking his metaphor for an accusation at her desertion. "I was pretty near the bottom, when I came across him again. Yes, drunk, in a terrible souse on the floor of the station-house, and once more, Helen, it seemed to me I was looking at my own self, and again the shock sickened me as nothing else could. All the prayers, sermons, exhortations of the finest, most upright, noblest ministers God ever made couldn't have brought me to time as the sight of that sodden, dirty old man with the traces still on his bloated purple face of the family from which he had sprung. If he had been coarse and repulsive in every way, it wouldn't have affected me at all. But he was a gentleman brought where he was through drink, and his origin still showed. It was pitiful. It upset me completely. I got him home and straightened up myself. Don't you see how it is, Helen?"

"You do not see how it is, Reggie," she declared, too far gone to see the humility the man suffered in confessing to any one this which no one but Dobbins

dreamed of. He had laid his soul bare for her and she had eyes for nothing but her own misery. "The first two or three times you saw the old man drunk may have been a shock to you, but the effect will wear off as you keep seeing him in that condition, and your old craving will be aroused in the constant presence of drink."

"There may be truth in that but I don't think so. When a man begins to drink in his youth, he can throw it off in his maturity. You forget how old I am, my dear girl. Besides, when we marry, Tim won't be around much."

"We can not marry until I am sure of your sobriety by your giving Timothy up."

"But, Helen," expostulated the man, "I have just proved —"

"You have proved nothing. Don't let's argue any longer. I am so tired. Tell me whether you will give him up or me."

"I won't give up either of you."

"You will have to."

"I can't go back on Timothy, Helen."

"Very well. We have, fortunately, told no one of our short engagement, so there will be nothing to retract. I shall keep the flowers so the servants won't gossip and as you have given me no ring, there is nothing I need return."

She gathered up the flowers and turned toward the door, her face white and pinched, her knees shaking.

"Helen!" Reggie did not move, but his cry was pleading, filled with anguish. But for the moment, insane with jealousy, she would not listen. At the door she glanced back and bowed coldly, a slim thing, in her simple green gown, her arms full of the spring flowers.

"You have chosen," said she. "Good morning."

The curtains fell into place and Reggie was alone.

March gave place to April and April stood aside for May. It was spring in earnest now, nearly summer. Flower venders were out in force and every house that could afford it had its gay little window boxes. The first faint green on the trees was no longer a fairy verdure, but thick and shady. The children and the birds appeared together, and the streets were filled with the noisy ranks of the former and the equally noisy bands of the latter. Already the country exodus had begun among the wealthy, and one by one houses were being boarded up and left deserted, their yards and area ways collecting-points for cats and wind-blown papers.

Reggie had grown white and thin the last three months and Timothy was worried. He knew it

was not because Reggie was working hard, though he was, harder than he had ever worked before, with a tense desire to keep himself from thinking. There was some misunderstanding between him and Helen, Timothy knew, but he had not been able to find out just what it was. Reggie had told him briefly and simply the morning after he had announced his engagement, that he had been premature, there was no engagement and probably never would be.

Timothy had realized by one glance at the young man's face that it was no time for confidences and had merely nodded. He told himself that there had been a lover's quarrel and his boy, still too sore to talk about it, would come around in time and tell him everything as he always did. So Timothy had waited. But the months had passed and Reggie had said nothing. He had quietly dropped all of his social affairs, devoting himself with feverish energy to his business. Timothy, with the wisdom of age, let him go his way, simply following at his heels, as it were, with the devotion of a favorite dog. Reggie's first desire to drink again was pushed aside as childish and lacking pride. He would show Helen that liquor no longer had any hold on him under any provocation. He spent his

days at the office, his evenings at the play, or club, or more often quietly at home, with Timothy, reading.

As the days grew longer and warmer, the two would go for motor week-end trips into the country. Helen had not left the city and until she went, Reggie wanted to be near, hoping day after day with foolish heart-sick longing, that she would telephone him to come back. He wrote, but she did not answer. He called and the servant told him she was out. His anger with the girl that had at first stifled all other feelings and had helped him over the first few weeks, passed and only his longing to see her and hear her remained. For twelve years he had courted her and the habit of the years could not be discarded like an old coat. To Timothy he was always gentle and considerate as the two had ever been to each other, and Timothy never dreamed that he was the cause of the broken engagement.

Helen was suffering more than Reggie. For years she had been so absolutely sure of him, so firmly convinced that his love for her was supreme over every other interest in his life, except the terrible desire for drink, that now to realize he cared more for an old man, as she thought, than he did for her seemed impossible, unbelievable. Her wounded love suffered torture. All day she thought

of him, and her longing was mingled with her constantly growing jealousy of Timothy. She wanted to forget, to rid herself of this pain that was becoming intolerable, but like Reggie, she could not bring herself to leave the city while he was in it and likely to write to her any moment that he had given up Timothy. He did write, trembling incoherent appeals for mercy, for understanding, heated emphatic proofs of all that Timothy had done for him and how it would be worse than deserting his father to give the old man up now, violent protests that he loved her above everything. His feeling toward Timothy was one of duty as well as love.

She read these letters over and over and then burned them without replying. It was his duty, she told herself, to her as well as to himself, to give up this gin-besotted old man. Helen, like a great many seemingly gentle people, had a colossal stubbornness where her own convictions and will were concerned. Reggie had looked up to her for so many years as a saint, as absolutely faultless, that she had come to believe it of herself and would not consider the possibility that she was in the wrong now, that that superb judgment of hers, relied on by so many societies — beneficent, suffrage, charity, prohibition,— could have erred. And she would have denied hotly the base assertion

that she was not entirely moved by jealousy, pitiful, human, ordinary.

She no longer met Reggie at the houses where they had been wont to meet. She steadfastly refused to see him when he called and she sternly refrained from looking out of the window as he left. She heard of him now and then and knew that he was working hard and keeping perfectly sober. Somehow it seemed another affront to her and her influence that he could keep straight when she had refused to have anything more to do with him. Instead of proving his words that Timothy was not at all bad for his moral welfare, it proved to her love-crazed brain that he cared more for the old man than he did for her, that what she did or said had no longer any influence on his life, where it was wont to have had so much before Timothy came. He needed Timothy but he did not need her. The thought was agony, but she clung to it, bitterly, miserably, desperately.

She grew white and thin and listless as April came and went and May dawned on the world and waned toward June. She was no longer interested in suffrage, and good deeds palled on her. Yet she refused to leave the city, pointing out, illogically, to her mother's anxious pleadings that she go somewhere for a change, that since the poor could not

go, why should she leave whenever the humor seized her? That she could afford to go and the poor couldn't was a fairly good reason to Mrs. Maynard for her going, but Helen refused to see it so. Late in May the weather became unbearably hot, but Mrs. Maynard would not leave town unless Helen went and the girl was finally forced to consent to go. Now that the decision had been made, she decided to go as far as possible. Reggie had not written for three weeks and had probably ceased even to think about her. She would kill her love for him, she would not suffer so. She would, she must, forget.

To her mother's startled surprise, she announced that she was not only ready to go, but intended to keep on going until they had gone around the world. They could take the boat at San Francisco for Hawaii and the Orient. Her mother could come or not as she pleased.

Helen was distinctly cross. Her mother accepted the offer at once.

"Of course, I shall go, dear," declared the good lady hastily. "I shall enjoy it immensely."

"You have been before," warned Helen, glancing at her mother across the disordered tea-table. They had been dispensing tea to the few friends who were still in town but were now alone.

"I have remained at home before, also," explained her mother, who was not a college graduate or a suffragette, and frankly uninterested in any uplift work whatever, and who argued with a certain directness that was disconcerting, if not exactly intellectual. She was besides always a little frightened of Helen and therefore a trifle nervous.

Helen fought her inclinations to write Reggie of her departure long and fiercely. He would learn soon enough through the papers. A note from her would be an entire surrender of her pride. He did not care for her, did not need her. Why, then, should it interest him when or where she went? So she did not write and Reggie read of it, as she knew he would, in the papers.

He was at breakfast when he found the paragraph. Every morning he read the society column to learn whatever piece of news of her he could, for he never spoke to any one about her, not even to Timothy. He read the short item slowly, his face growing white and drawn. When he finished it he half groaned, half swore, and aware that Timothy was watching him anxiously across the table, sought to cover it with a laugh.

"She's going, Tim," said he, laying the paper aside. "Going to be gone for three years, a lifetime — and I'm all alone."

"She will come back, Van," declared Timothy, "long before that time. She cares more for you than you think."

But Reggie would not be encouraged. "She cares more for right-living, for decency and sobriety and honor than she does for me," he returned in gloomy pride.

"Pish!" laughed Timothy. "She says so, but don't you believe it. There isn't a woman yet who, if she really loves a man, cares a nickel about anything but him. That is why so many of us worthless husks find wives. God bless 'em."

Reggie shook his head. "Helen is different," said he and went back to his paper.

But he could not grasp what he was reading and stared blindly at the sheet as he asked himself for the thousandth time why he gave up his girl, his dainty, upright, loving, tender girl, the playmate of his boyhood, the chum and companion of his youth, the sweetheart of his maturity, for an unknown old man, picked up from the slums, dragged from what miserable past, what filth and mire one could only faintly surmise. What right had he to do it? The struggle to answer, to defend his instinctive action, was too much for him with the news of her immediate departure so fresh. He threw aside the paper and jumped up.

"Going?" asked Timothy, noticing the unfinished breakfast.

"Yes," said Reggie a bit bruskly. "I have some important letters I want to get out before noon. Don't hurry! I can ring for my car."

"I am through," fibbed Timothy. "I have a lot I want to do to-day, too."

In his office, Timothy hung up his hat and coat and idly ran over his mail, his thoughts engrossed with Reggie and his unhappiness. One letter alone claimed his conscious intelligence and he smiled as he read it. It was from Mary Fisher — Mrs. John McAlister, now — telling of her wedding. It had been very quiet and unexpected and she and the baby were already settled in their new home. Did Timothy feel hurt that she had not asked him? She was too old to have any girlish fuss made over her nuptials. Did he care to take back the farm, or should she keep on making her yearly payments? It was a good property and she and John were willing to buy it or let Timothy have it, just as he wished. "I am so happy," she closed. "I have waited long, but I have got the best, now that it has come."

Timothy wrote congratulating her and enclosing a check for the amount of the payments she had so happily scraped together as her part toward the

purchase of the farm. He would take back the farm, he wrote, thinking of Betsy. He wanted it. But she must accept the instalment money she had paid on it. She had improved it and made it of greater value than the rent for the three years she had lived on it would come to. If she refused to take the money as he knew she would, she was to put it in the bank for Annie's baby. The letter written, Timothy's thoughts turned again anxiously to Reggie and his trouble.

He was sure Helen cared for the boy. She had met a great many men and doubtless with her money and social position, to say nothing of her good looks and sweetness, could have married long ago if she had not been unconsciously waiting for Reggie these many years. What could have come between them now when they seemed to be at peace at last? Reggie was a man again. She had consented to marry him. What had come between them? Some foolish thing Timothy supposed, like that which was separating him and his Betsy. Women in love were more hopelessly illogical than anything else in the world, and the more they loved, the more unreasonable they became. If the two could only be brought together and made to talk their troubles over they would see how childish they were, would laugh and make up.

Conventionality and formality had become mere empty words to Timothy as they do to any one who has lived much on the lower East Side, amidst squalor and the hand-to-mouth existence in which one is facing alone and unaided, cold and hunger and sickness, the great primal facts of life. An introduction is ridiculous when one is starving, a calling card, a childish absurdity. When one thing can be set right out of the multiple of things that are hopelessly wrong, one sets it right, promptly and without hesitation as to the exact social form to be used in the doing of it.

Timothy knew Helen did not like him, but he was determined to call and do his best to see what was wrong and set it right for his boy, to brush aside the filmy cobwebs of a lover's quarrel. He decided he would call at once. She was leaving the following day and would probably have a score of visitors in the afternoon, although so many of her friends had long ago left town. He called her up on the telephone and asked if he would find her in if he called.

Helen was just going out. She had her hat and gloves on and the car was waiting at the door when the maid summoned her to the telephone. When she heard Timothy's name she hesitated while a flood of color swept over her pale face. What

could he want of her? Had Reggie sent him to make peace? No. That she knew was impossible. Reggie would never do such a thing as that. But she was positive that Timothy was coming in Reggie's behalf, and her heart and her woman's curiosity urged her to stay in and see him. She was leaving next day, so it could do no harm to see him. Reggie had not written and she longed for some last word from him. Timothy was next best. She was surprised, nervous, excited, but her well-bred voice held no hint of her feelings as she answered that she would be in. Then she hung up the receiver and burst into tears. Her mother, passing through the room, wondered miserably what could be the matter with her.

CHAPTER XXIII

HELEN AND TIMOTHY

TIMOTHY hung up the receiver rather nervously, but thankful that Helen, like Mary McAlister, was a lady and that there would be no scene, no tears and vituperations, such as one of Annie's class would employ. He called up his car from a down-town garage where he kept it during the day, and leaving a check for five hundred dollars with his secretary and instructions to buy Mrs. John McAlister a wedding present for that amount and send it to her with his card, sallied forth, sublimely confident that Reggie's troubles were now over.

Helen came to him directly in the long dim drawing-room with its blinds lowered to keep out the heat. She was fond of flowers and they were everywhere, filling the room with sweetness, mingled with the cool fragrance from the conservatory, a tropical paradise which opened into the drawing-room. Pausing to glance around, hat and stick in hand, Timothy thought with tender pity of Mrs. Russell, with her one close room and the wash, as he had last seen the place, suspended from the bed

to the bureau on a hempen line, with other garments festooning a chair-back. Then Helen came in and he dismissed the rush of angry bitter thoughts that one no more worthy should have so much, the other so little.

Helen looked charming as usual in her simple gown and great flower hat. Her thin face was slightly flushed, her eyes were bright and her red mouth was a trifle tremulous. She was a decidedly pretty woman, but like Annie she was what her life and environment had made her, charming, self-poised, gracious, stubborn and selfish. In the sterner crucible of poverty, her graciousness might have worn thin, her selfishness vanished in the generosity of a true woman. No one could tell. She had never been tested, as was poor foolish Annie who, with only floors to scrub and nothing ahead but trouble, had lost what little wit she might have retained and developed under better circumstances. As Helen was, her charm and sweetness were qualities that would probably remain and be admired to the last. She was a lovable girl, simply a bit more narrow and selfish than one that would appeal to Timothy and be able to win his love. She bowed graciously and motioned to a chair.

“Won’t you sit down?”

“I won’t keep you long,” promised Timothy.

"I am an old man, Miss Maynard, and I am going to take an old man's privilege. You must pardon me if I am rude. Tell me what is the trouble between you and Reggie!"

It was the way he had learned on the lower East Side, to get right down to business with no opening formalities. To inquire there about one's health and mention the weather is a foolish waste of time, a needless strain to overwrought nerves when one is interested in neither the weather nor the other's health.

Helen flushed with sudden anger, opened her mouth to speak, then paused and thought swiftly. Why should she be angry? She knew this was the subject Timothy had come to discuss and she had told him to come. He was direct but that was better than silly evasions and fruitless fencing. The flush died and she looked frankly at the old man.

"Has Reggie said anything to you about — it?" she asked, her old animosity for this man who had come between her and Reggie making her manner cool to coldness. There was no longer anything about Timothy to excite any one's pity. He was the picture of well-dressed, well-fed contentment, though around his mouth were tiny lines that hinted of the past. His eyes were frankly and humanly interested and curious about everything, not show-

ing the blank stare of repression Helen was used to. She and Timothy were enemies on equal footing, fighting for the man both loved.

"No," replied Timothy, sitting beside her on the divan. "Van has never said a word to me, except one morning late in February, or early in March — I have forgotten the exact date — when he told me that you and he were to be married. The next morning, he said he had been premature in his statement. That is all that either of us has ever said on the subject. But I have seen that something is wrong. The boy is eating his heart out for you. Can't you help him?"

"I am helping him. That is why I broke the engagement," returned Helen.

"Helping him?" repeated Timothy. "May I ask how?"

"Why the permission — now?"

Timothy smiled. "A mere form, really. Tell me how you think you are helping him. The boy went all to pieces this morning when he read of your departure to-morrow. Can it not be possible that you have made a mistake and are not helping him? He loves you more than he does any one else in all the world."

"No, you are mistaken. He cares for another more."

"How do you know?"

"I gave him his choice between me and that other."

"And he chose the other?" Timothy was frankly incredulous.

Helen nodded. "He chose the other. What could I do? What can I do now?"

Timothy shook his head. "You are terribly mistaken," he declared. "Indeed, it is not so. I have known that boy's most intimate life for the last three years and I can swear that you are the only woman in it."

"The other was a man."

Timothy felt as though some one had struck him. His face turned slowly white and seemed to fall in and wrinkle even as the first vague surmise of the truth gripped him. His eyes looked piteous, like those of a whipped dog, in the swift glance he gave the girl. Then he turned aside until he could force back the miserable fear that had seized him.

"Ah," said he and gazed at the heavy rug at his feet as though pondering the suggestion.

Helen had intended to hurt. Timothy had talked about "his boy," and knowing Reggie's "intimate life," while her heart cried out in anguish that Reggie was hers and hers alone, and blindly, pas-

sionately, she had struck as she had been struck. But when she saw how great the shock had been, her anger vanished in shamed pity for the old man and the fear that she had gone too far, struck deeper than she had intended. She rose to her feet to end the interview, in a faint hope that she would not have to be any more definite.

"This conversation is useless," said she hurriedly, looking down on Timothy where he still sat, too dazed to rise at once with his hostess. "What has happened is between no one but Reggie and me. I have known Reggie longer than you have. I care for him far more. Drink has been a terrible temptation to him. He has fought it bravely, I know. Do you not think I have seen his struggles and struggled with him in the only way a woman can when looking on?"

"He has stopped for good," snapped Timothy, hurt at the slur against his boy. "He is as decent a man as any in New York, a man any woman can be proud of. I know him through and through, his kindness, his generosity —"

"And so do I," interrupted the girl sharply. "I too know him and know him better than any one, for I have known him longer. I know he has conquered, if he would not go — with a certain man.

This man drinks to excess. He will drag Reggie down again. I have pleaded and pleaded with him to give this man up —”

Timothy drew in his breath with a sudden catch. One arm was resting along the back of the divan, his fingers beating a restless tattoo. They stopped now and the hand hanging between his knees clenched slowly and then opened.

The girl paused in her rush of words and looked sharply at him. “Pardon me, did you speak?”

“No,” said Timothy. “I am very much interested. Van wouldn’t go back on his friend, you say. What then?”

“I was an older friend,” pleaded the girl pitifully. “We had been boy and girl together. I loved him and was waiting for him to make a man of himself. I have waited twelve years. I am a woman now over thirty. Had I no rights in him? I know this man is bad for him, especially now when he is just beginning to walk alone as it were. I gave him his choice between me and this man.”

“I see.” Timothy rose and smiled down into the girl’s eyes. “Van wanted you both, I suppose, and was too loyal to his friend to see why he couldn’t keep both. I think you underestimate your influence entirely. Why should it not have

been stronger for good than this man's for evil?"

"I was afraid. The evil is always the stronger."

"I see." Timothy picked up his gloves and stood a moment idly drawing them through his hand. His face was white but quite expressionless now and the girl could not fathom his thoughts. She strove to defend herself against she knew not what accusation going on behind those inscrutable eyes.

"Probably you think I did not have faith enough? But twelve unrewarded years is a hard strain on one's faith."

"Yes, it is," agreed Timothy, moving toward the door. "And faith without works is not well spoken of in the Bible. You did quite right, but I think you have suffered unnecessarily. Van loves you. He doesn't care for me at all, in comparison. He felt toward me as, I suppose, a man does when he gives up his love for his duty, a sort of 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more' feeling."

"But did he owe no duty to me?" asked Helen, wondering why Timothy seemed to miss the point and insist merely on Reggie's love for her. Did he think she doubted Reggie's love for her? Had she not doubted it? No, she told herself fiercely, she had never doubted it. She was not so ignoble as to be jealous of any one.

"Yes," agreed Timothy, "he did owe you duty as well as love. You leave to-morrow, don't you?"

"Yes, at five, from the Grand Central."

"If Van comes to say good-by, you will see him, won't you?"

"Yes," said the girl. "I—I will say good-by."

"Thank you," said Timothy. "That is all any one could ask."

He moved to the door, bowed gravely and went out.

Timothy told his chauffeur to take the car to the home garage. He would not need it any longer that day, as he intended to take the subway back. The man touched his cap and drove off, deciding that his employer looked sick but doubtless knew what he was about.

Timothy stood on the curb, leaning on his stick and watched the little car roll away with a gentle hum of its expensive engines. But he did not see the car. He was thinking too deeply. The ensuing quiet of the wide sunny street brought him to himself. He had a lot to do and there was no time to waste. He started toward the subway station, then changed his mind and took a Fifth Avenue bus that rumbled up just then. He climbed to the roof, found a seat in front, and leaned forward, his hands on the top of his stick, his chin on his hands. He

needed time to think, and might as well take it in the air on the roof of the slow bus. He was white and looked suddenly old and tired and listless. His eyes, gazing straight before him down the narrowing vista of the avenue, saw nothing in their fixed stare.

He wore a light gray suit, gray silk socks and an expensive straw hat. His low shoes were hand-made and so were the gloves crossed upon the stick. In his buttonhole was a moss rosebud. He thought once in grimly whimsical humor of the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, fastened with two clasp-pins and a button, of the shabby trousers, too short and too tight, of the faded geranium picked up in the alley behind a florist's, of the ragged shoes, the stockings with no feet, and of the complete and hopeless lack of underclothes. But he put the thought firmly aside. He had too much else to think of in planning how to confer all his possessions, borrowed and otherwise, back to their rightful owner, Reggie Boggs.

The farm he decided he would keep. To quibble over it was foolish as he had spent several times its price on clothes and trifles which it would be impossible to return. Besides, Van would feel better knowing he had the place. He would give the boy a mortgage on it and then spend the rest

of his life trying to pay it off. He knew nothing about farming and felt that the deed would be impossible to accomplish, but he would try anyway, and Mrs. McAlister and her John would help him.

It was late when he reached the down-town district, but he did not think of lunch. He went directly to his office. He summoned his staff and dismissed them with good recommendations and two months' wages, instructing his bookkeeper to carry all the books to his lawyers as soon as possible. Then he collected all the necessary papers, burned the unnecessary, and making arrangements with a second-hand furniture dealer to call that afternoon at three for his office fixings, hurried around to his lawyers.

He found the junior partner in, a tall, clean-cut, sharp-featured youth who was already beginning to be known in high circles. He ordered Timothy admitted at once and shook hands jovially. He and his partner had grown fond of the courtly old gentleman, with his many kindly but unworldly projects. Timothy had intended to have Patrick O'Brady handle his affairs. It would have been the making of Patrick, no matter how doubtful the results might have been for Timothy, but Patrick could not be found. Whether with Reggie's check

he had gone on and continued to prosper or the great uncharted sea of poverty had again claimed him and dragged him down among its unnamed thousands, Timothy never found out. Mrs. Russell used to think that the lad had taken his sudden windfall and returned to the old country to prosper among his kind. Van Sant, the young lawyer, wondered what Timothy was up to now, and pushing forward a chair, asked him to be seated.

"Are you hungry?" asked Timothy. "It is after lunch hour."

Van Sant laughed. "No, indeed, not a bit. What have you there?" eying the bundle of papers Timothy carried. "Not planning to endow an orphan asylum are you?"

"An orphan," replied Timothy, untying the tape around the bundle.

"Another Annie?" questioned Van Sant. "By the way, Mr. Payne, we were just going to notify you that Annie is very sick,—her lungs, you know. She is in a squalid room near First Avenue. Apparently she hasn't a cent. We think she gives—maybe is forced to—all of your monthly check to some worthless scoundrel. We were going to write and find out what you want done about it."

"I shall go and see her myself," said Timothy. "Have you her address?"

"I will get it," said Van Sant, ringing for his stenographer. "What other orphan were you planning to endow?"

"Van," said Timothy in grim amusement. "I want to make over to him everything I own but this small farm in Connecticut. I want to give him a mortgage on that for the amount of the property. Everything is given to him at once and unconditionally. He understands what my transactions have been and can carry them on exactly as I would if I still had it to do. You can arrange it for me, I believe?"

"You will only have the income from the trust fund?" questioned Van Sant in surprise.

"Not at all. Everything is to be returned absolutely, unconditionally." And Timothy looked across the desk straight into Van Sant's incredulous young face. "You can do it?"

"Yes, certainly," stammered the youth.
"But—"

"You can have the deeds drawn up by this afternoon, so I can sign them then? I am leaving town to-day."

"Yes, certainly, but—"

Timothy pushed the papers across the desk. "All I own, stocks, mortgages and so on, will be found there. This is the deed of the farm. That

also is to go to Van. I am simply to have a mortgage. Understand?"

"Yes, certainly, but —"

"This is strictly confidential. Van is not to be notified until he calls himself, as I shall tell him to."

The young man took the papers in a daze and ran his eye thoughtfully through them.

"My bookkeeper is bringing the books over," went on Timothy. "I think that will be all you will need."

Van Sant nodded.

There was a moment's silence as the young man fumbled with the papers and Timothy, frowning at the desk, toyed with the tape that had bound them, wondering if he had given all his instructions. He could think of nothing else and rose to go.

"I am tired of money," he explained with a laugh as he adjusted the rose in his buttonhole and picked up Annie's address which the stenographer had left on a slip of paper. "Too much is as bad as too little." He waved his hand airily, knowing that Mrs. Russell alone would have read the sarcasm in his voice, then flicking a bit of dust from his coat, he wished the still dazed youth good morning, and head erect, shoulders back, once more penniless and out of a job, he strolled slowly to the door and down the hall to the elevator.

CHAPTER XXIV

BACK TO THE FARM

TIMOTHY had no desire for lunch. He was too anxious to sever the last tie that bound him to Reggie to be able to think of anything else, what he was leaving, what he was going into. The last three years of luxury had always seemed more like a dream than a reality to him and it was hardly surprising to find them at last ended. He could think of nothing but Reggie and what the boy had given up for his sake. Reggie knew as well as Timothy that if they had separated, Timothy would have refused to take a cent. He had asked Timothy to live with him, had overridden all the old man's objections and finally won his reluctant consent on the plea of personal necessity, a genuine plea made from the heart, for his condition had been terrible, his need dire. Under the circumstances, he could not have broken the partnership even if the years had not generated in him a deep love for the old man.

Timothy went to the Third Avenue L and took

the train home, warm and tired, but his heart full of tenderness for his boy.

"It was like him, it was like him," he said to himself over and over, filled with pride for the lad, with disgust for himself that knowing Helen and how she felt toward him, he had never had the faintest suspicion what the trouble was between the two.

"Any damn fool but me would have guessed ages ago," he thought moodily as he got out at his station and started for the stairs to the street.

At the house, he went directly to his rooms. Reggie had not come back as he feared might have happened with the boy as upset as he was, and Dobbins was out, also. Timothy pulled off his gloves and glanced around the small cozy sitting-room with a whimsical shrug. It had been all more or less play as it had seemed to him—the furnishing and living in these luxurious rooms, with his own bath and valet. He had gone without the little luxuries so long that he realized the emptiness of "too much tinsel," as he had been wont to call the rugs, the huge fireplace and great soft upholstered chairs.

"You are smothering my soul, Van," he had been wont to say, "in a feather bed."

It had been more or less of a joke, the

valet he did not need, the surfeit of luxury that no one needs. Only Reggie, his love and companionship had been real, had been what counted. The rest was superfluous, but it was comfortable, good to look at and good to feel, and Timothy knew he would miss it. But at present he was too busy to give a thought to himself.

He changed into a heavier suit that seemed more in keeping with a farm, packed two suit-cases with underclothes, another suit and a fur-lined overcoat, and his toilet articles, cut-glass and silver-mounted, all presents from Van.

"When the pig dies of colic and the last hen of over-eating, I can sell them and keep going a while longer," he thought as he packed. When all was done, he returned to the sitting-room and wrote Reggie a note. He left the note with the butler with instructions to give it to Van when he returned, feeling sure the boy would not be back until late since he had not already returned, and with Helen's departure drawing so near, Van, like himself, would want to keep occupied so he might not think. The butler was for calling up the garage for a car for Timothy, but the old man said he preferred the subway. He was going for a few days' trip in the country. He chose a soft panama as being appropriate for the country, and,

a suit-case in each hand, went out, leaving the butler staring stupidly after him.

Timothy went directly to the Grand Central, checked his suit-cases and found that a train left late that night for Boston, stopping at the small station he desired to reach. He bought a ticket and consulted his watch, a heavy gold affair.

"It will come in handy when the bugs have made off with my potato crop," he reflected.

It was nearly three. There was nothing to do now until five when he was due at his lawyers' to sign the deeds, except to find Annie and see what could be done for her. He felt suddenly hungry and remembered that he had had no lunch. The day was stifling, with heavy thunder-heads rolling up over the sky-scrapers and rumbling off in a murky haze. The heat was oppressive and the dark suit he wore, which was heavier than the gray one had been, did not tend to lessen it. Timothy wanted a drink as he never did before, but decided he could not risk it. He had Annie to find and the papers to sign before he would be free to make a last call on his Betsy and he wanted to go there sober. He feared if he took a drink then, he would keep on taking one and be too drunk to go to Long Island.

He found a small cheap restaurant on a side

street, such a restaurant as he knew well where to find, and got some coffee and bread and butter. The place was narrow and close, filled with the odor of boiled cabbage and frying sausage. The table-cloth was coarse and hardly clean. Flies were everywhere, on the sugar-bowl, milk pitcher and the great piles of thick bread. Timothy chose the place, sure that Reggie would not find him there, knowing that when the young man missed him at his office, he would go the round of the clubs and lunch rooms the two frequented, hunting for him.

He ate slowly, feeling tired and depressed now that there was nothing more to do, the hurry over. The slatternly waitress watched him with blankly stupid eyes. When he had finished, he tipped the girl liberally, and strolled listlessly out.

He went to Annie's address which the lawyer had given him and found it to be on the top floor of a noisy, dirty, overcrowded tenement. In the close murky day, the stench of the narrow halls and dark little rooms with their doors open to get the least breath of air, was fearful. It seemed to jump at one and overpower all sense. It brought back in a flash the days of the bottle-green, dusty-yellow coat, fastened with two clasp-pins and a button, the dreary rain-soaked bread-lines, the cold over-crowded Mills Hotel when one was affluent. The

thought of what he was leaving rushed over him for a moment in a wave of nausea for all this which he had known. He vowed no matter what happened he would not return to these dens which were not fit for human beings to live in. He would go rather to the county poorhouse. There at least he would have plenty of room out-of-doors if not within. He could stand the crowded interior for the hours he had to remain indoors, for the sake of the fields and the open roads and sunshine unpolluted by the city's sweat and grime.

He found that Annie was a boarder in a three-room apartment kept by a man and his wife and ten children. One room had no window, the only opening being into a tall, narrow filthy air-shaft. A gas-jet was feebly burning and by its flickering light Annie, some of the family and as many of the boarders as could crowd into the room along with five sewing-machines, were making corset covers. Annie sat in one corner with the children, pulling out basting threads, which was as heavy work as she had strength for. A soiled damp rag was tied around her aching head. She kept another rag tucked in the front of her dress on which she wiped her blood-flecked lips after a coughing paroxysm, provided there was not too much blood, in which case she had to get up and spit down the air-shaft.

She coughed constantly and all the children coughed with her, and the five sewing-machines never stopped.

It was the first room Timothy came to and he glanced in as the door was open in the vain hope of more air. For a moment he could make out nothing, but as his eyes grew used to the gloom, he became aware of the machine nearest the door and that the man bent over it in trousers and sleeveless undershirt turned in at the neck, was staring up at him from beneath a shock of long, black, matted hair.

"Does a woman by the name of Annie Spigleheimer live here?" asked Timothy, trying to see into the dim recesses of the room.

Annie recognized him and rose, dropping her work.

"Yes," said she, before the man at the door could answer, then went into a paroxysm of coughing brought on by her excitement.

Startled, Timothy glanced beyond the man, past other white animal faces, raised a moment from their work, though back and shoulders were still crouched over the machines and the machines did not stop for a single stitch. He saw Annie in the corner, leaning against the wall, and at her feet a pile of corset covers and three wan children.

Timothy's heart turned sick with helpless pity as he realized that he could no longer help these images of God.

"Can you come out a moment?" he asked above the uproar of the constantly whirling machines. "I want to speak to you."

"For how long?" demanded the creature at the door. "She don't work fast enough now and she owe t'ree week' board."

Timothy looked down into the small wolf eyes staring up at him through the greasy hair and tossed on the machine a bill that immediately disappeared in the flash of a thin hairy hand. Then he turned to Annie who had made her way to the door and stepped backward before her out into the hall.

Annie had on simply an old waist, opened at the throat, with sleeves rolled up, a calico skirt, sagging behind, from whose confines the waist was escaping here and there, and a pair of ragged slippers, no stockings, and few underclothes if any, Timothy judged from his own past experience. The girl was pitifully thin. Her chest was sunken in and her arms were like bones stripped of flesh. Her face was scarlet with heat and fever. Her scant colorless hair was drawn straight back and wound into a knot so tight it needed no hairpins to keep it

in place. The damp rag around her forehead was filthy and kept slipping down over one eye.

"Annie," said Timothy gently, and stopped through sheer inability to go on.

The girl leaned against the wall and began to cry.

"There, there," soothed Timothy, patting her on her frail shoulder. "There, there."

"I'm sick," she sobbed after a moment as her tears ended in another fit of coughing. "I'm sick."

"Why didn't you go back to the farm?" asked Timothy, waiting until the coughing had stopped and the girl had wiped her trembling bloody lips.

"He wouldn't let me, said you'd stop the allowance, thinking I wouldn't need it," whispered the girl, too weak to talk louder.

"Who is he?" asked Timothy.

"Me husband."

"Legal?"

"Yes, s'help me God."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"Comes once a month, I suppose, and gets the money?"

"Yes, blast him."

Timothy turned away from the pitiful wreck of a human being and tried to think what to do to

help her. He wished angrily that he could have helped all those in that dark, foul, crowded room, but he was penniless again and hopelessly incapable. Annie he knew personally and he must help her, but what could he do? If he gave her money, she would not be able to hide it in that rabbit-warren and her husband would hear of it and take it all. He saw the whole foolish story:—the miserable girl returning to the city with the monthly allowance he had been quick to give her, making a cheap show of herself, finally meeting the rascal who married her, took her money and left her to scrub floors again. She grew sicker until scrubbing became too heavy for her strength and she sank lower and lower, too sick and miserable and cowed to defend herself and her money from her “man.” Her contagious disease was all that had prevented her from being put into a resort and earning more for her lord and master.

Timothy blamed himself for not having kept a closer watch on the girl, but Annie even at her best was so unappealing, more a nonentity than a person, that she had slipped his mind entirely during the last three years. Now what could he do for her? He stared down the black pit of the stairs, up which came the distant rumble of the street mingled with the continuous hum of machines on all the floors in

all the rooms. The shrill voices of women, the screams of children and the steady rise and fall of babies crying, were borne upward on the putrid air, foul with odors of every description save pleasant. The girl leaned against the wall now and watched him, spent and indifferent, her excitement at seeing him once more washed away by spirits practically dead from sickness and overwork.

"Annie," Timothy turned to her with a sudden resolution. "Annie, do you want to go back to the farm?"

"Do I?" asked the girl. "Try me and see."

"I am going myself. Mary Fisher has married and left the place. I am going back to live there. I haven't any money, but if you want to come and live with me, why we shall get along somehow."

The girl began to cry.

"Now, Annie, don't do that. It'll only make you cough, you know."

"I couldn't get in no resort because of me sickness," sobbed the girl. "Every one would have been afraid of me. Won't you be?"

The coarseness of the confession and the idea of what she thought their relations would be was drowned in the rare bravery that had inspired the girl to throw away her last chance of relief by making it. Timothy had not believed that she had

it in her. She was no longer pitiful in his eyes, but fine, and to be honored. It was as brave a thing as he knew of and his eyes filled with tears as he took her hand.

"Annie, Annie," he soothed, patting the hand he held. "I am old enough to be your father. I will be, dear. I must be somebody's father," he added whimsically, with a miserable thought of Van. "You won't have a thing to do until you get well. Can you trust me?"

"You can have me anyway you want me," said she dully, beginning to cough again.

"I am leaving to-night at eleven from the Grand Central," said Timothy, after her coughing had stopped. "Can you meet me there?"

"I ain't got no clothes."

"Come with me, now. Haven't you got a cloak or something you can put on? I will take you to the Y. W. C. A. They will take care of you and get you clothes with the money I shall leave them. Then I shall come and get you to-night."

"I owe 'em here."

"How much?"

"Five dollars."

"I will pay them. Get your cloak."

"Ain't got none."

"Hasn't somebody got one you can buy?"

Annie nodded.

"Get it," said Timothy, slipping some money into her hand. "I will pay what you owe here."

He had read Annie's fear of her husband in her colorless eyes and knew it was needless to caution her not to say anything. The cloak she produced was old but long and it covered her from her head to her heels. Side by side the old man and the girl went down the long narrow stairs, amid the surprised and startled inmates who paused a second in their screams, vituperations and cries but not in their work to watch the well-dressed Timothy pass, as those living in the Saint Regis or the Waldorf-Astoria would have stared had Annie in her two-piece frock with no stockings scurried through the hall.

Timothy's stock of cash was rapidly going, but he remembered the gold watch, the silver-topped, cut-glass toilet articles and deciding he would have enough, found a forlorn closed cab and hailed it, helping the girl in and following her.

"If he sees me—" Annie kept whispering, glancing around with the quick shifty glance of a trapped animal.

"I'd like to see him," growled Timothy. "I would have him run in for this and you could get a

decent divorce and marry a farmer who would take care of you."

"Maybe," said she, frankly unimpressed. "But if he sees me—" And she pulled down the faded curtain on her side and sank back into the corner.

CHAPTER XXV

MORE TALK ABOUT MONEY

THE help Timothy requested from the Young Women's Christian Association was somewhat out of the ordinary, but the matron was a kindly soul, and Annie was such a pitiful-looking specimen, Timothy so helpless, anxious and courteous that he was assured everything would be as he wished. He went away relieved.

It was after five, and Timothy hurried around to his lawyers, where he signed the papers that made him once more practically penniless. There was nothing more to do now but call on his Betsy and he wondered, as he paused a moment on the curb in front of the office building, whether he could now risk a drink. But the homeward five o'clock rush had already begun, and he decided that he had better not stay any longer in that Wall Street district lest Van pass in his car and see him. So he joined the hurrying throng to the tube.

Windemere was bathed in an evening hush as Timothy turned in at the gates. The lawn stretched away on all sides, tree-shaded and as smooth as

velvet, cool and inviting in the evening light. The air was heavy with the odor of lilacs. Timothy removed his hat as he stepped over the flower-beds that bordered the paths so that he could walk on the grass and feel his street-weary feet sink into its softness. The flower-beds were gay with daffodils, hyacinths and fragrant English violets, nodding and smiling beneath the tender scientific care lavished on them by highly paid, skilful horticulturists, and Timothy thought suddenly of the three children he had seen in the close dark room, pulling basting threads and coughing all day, every day. He was tired and bitter, oppressed with the miserable tenement he had just left. He stopped angrily and deliberately stepped on a harmless little daffodil plant and crushed it into the earth, grinding it down with his heel. Then he glanced quickly at the house, now visible beneath the branches of the enormous live-oaks Betsy had had transplanted there at great expense to lend the rustic touch to the long, low rambling house which she fondly called a bungalow. The wide vine-shaded porch was empty as well as he could see, and there was no one in the direction of the green-houses which he could faintly distinguish, to call him to account for his sacrilege.

"Vandal," laughed a gay voice, and Betsy Boggs

stepped out from behind a huge syringa bush across the path and shook her finger at him.

"It made me sick," returned Timothy bluntly, "to see these flowers so tenderly cared for while there are children in the slums whom nobody wants."

"Don't I want to be poor?" she asked plaintively.

She wore a high-waisted, clinging gown of the softest of lavender silk, a simple gown, embroidered with purple violets, with rare lace at the neck and elbows, the price approximately five hundred dollars. Her slippers were lavender also, with silver buckles set with amethysts, while between them and the hem of the dainty gown, one caught glimpses of lavender silk stockings embroidered with purple violets like the dress. There was a brooch to match the shoe-buckles of silver and amethysts among the soft laces at her throat and on her round white arm, a bracelet to correspond. She wore no cap this evening, and her hair, entirely gray now, as it should have been for the last few years, was held in place by hairpins of silver set with amethysts. Timothy looked at her as she approached him in the twilight, holding up her soft skirts that she might step across the flower-beds and not injure the flowers. The birds were twittering sleepily in

the branches overhead. From the sound one heard the lap and wash of the waves, but otherwise, it was all very quiet, very peaceful in the beautiful grounds, and the lady picking her way toward him through the fragrant evening was a charming fancy from a poet's dream.

Timothy thought of the noisy crowded tenements, of Annie with her waist hanging loose behind over her sagging skirt, firmly tucked in in front to serve as a pocket for the blood-stained rag she used in place of a handkerchief. Timothy laughed, dropped his hat and caught the hands the little old lady extended to him.

"Poor," he smiled, looking down tenderly into her upturned eyes. "Poor! Dear girl, you don't know the meaning of the word."

She shook her head. "You do not know the poverty of wealth," said she. Then catching a closer sight of his white tired face, she became all brooding tenderness. "Dear, you are tired to death. Come in. It has been so warm to-day that it makes one tired."

She drew him up on the porch and pushed forward his favorite chair, into which he sank with a tired sigh. She hurried away and returned after a bit with a tray on which was a tall frost-encrusted glass exhaling a pleasant odor of mint and spices.

"What heinous crime is it called in society to dine in a suit like this?" asked Timothy as they entered the dining-room.

"It is an unpardonable offense," declared Betsy. "Break the ten commandments if you want to, sneer at your Creator if you feel like it, but for heaven's sake, don't wear a sack coat to dinner, or a four-in-hand if a bow tie is the thing. It is impossible, unforgivable, damnable." She nodded firmly and slipped into the chair Timothy held out for her.

"Then," said Timothy taking his place, "it is useless to ask for forgiveness."

"It is indeed," said she. "You have proved yourself forever one of the unregenerated. But why so tired and why the suit? Are you like the rest of us, wearing yourself to death in the pursuit of money?"

"Dear," said Timothy, "I am a poor man. I haven't more than fifty dollars to my name."

They were alone in the room. Betsy thrust her hand to him across the table and smiled happily.

"Oh, Timothy, now we can get married."

"Now, we can't," declared Timothy, laying his hand in hers. "I haven't a cent, practically. I can't afford to marry."

"Ah, but, Timothy," she pleaded. "I love you."

"And I love you, so it can not be."

"Listen, Timothy," she urged, withdrawing her hand. "We can go to that place you mentioned once in Connecticut —"

"I am no farmer. I do not know oats from barley."

"Ah," she cried, "we can learn."

"When people haven't a cent, they haven't time to study. They learn by experience, and it is hard, fearfully hard and slow and discouraging."

"And what about money? Oh, Timothy, please, don't you see? Money that you haven't made yourself deprives you of living. I don't want poverty. That is terrible. I know, I am reasonable. But decent poorness is life. It gives a man a chance to be a man. Look at Allie Benton! You know Allie, don't you? He inherited three hundred millions from his father last year. I was just reading in the papers how he has been given a place on some police commission or other and was hailed by the policemen assembled to give him his honorary membership as the finest young man in America. Now, I leave it to you, what has Allie done to be called the finest young man in America? It disgusted me. It smacks so of European servility—but most of our policemen are Europeans by birth and haven't gotten over being servile to money yet.

So we shall let that pass. Now, Allie is nice enough, a bit foolish, he didn't have brains enough to go through college, but so far he is a harmless youth. What, as I say, has he done to be called the finest young man in America? Why, any college in this country is chuck-full of boys working their way through who are fifty per cent. finer than Allie. Don't you see that that praise was empty, merely the servility of the masses? I endow a hospital with a million, don't even miss it. The doctors, metaphorically, fall on their knees and kiss the hem of my skirts. I wasn't generous, I wasn't noble. If the same doctors had seen a poor child share his dinner with another poor child, they would think in amused condescension that he was a generous little chap. But would they bow down before him as they do before me? Not at all, and yet that child was noble, that child's character grew just so much by his generous act. My character remained the same. I had done nothing generous. Don't you see, Timothy? Am I so stupid I can't make you see? A rich man's character doesn't grow. It is stationary or else drying up. It is his bank-account that grows, that has taken the place of himself. A rich man is like one who would put on a bathing suit and get into a painted tank so as not to be wet and chilly. A poor man is one who gets

into the waves, who feels them buffeting and tumbling him, whose blood leaps in his veins with the pleasure of the struggle with real water. Oh, Timothy, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see. If we were younger, we would face the world together and win—"

"Not money, but our own souls, Timothy."

"Yes, dear. But we are both too old. I can not work as I did once."

The butler entered and the conversation turned on trivial affairs, on the sudden departure of Henrietta in February for France, where her ideas of affinity would receive more consideration, on the gardens and the coming summer, until they had finished dinner and were on the darkened porch, once more in their favorite chairs, Timothy smoking. There was no moon and the sky was overcast. Low on the horizon were flashes of heat lightning, and now and then thunder rumbled ominously. Neither spoke for a while, Timothy, cool and well-fed, lay back in his chair and lost himself in the pleasure of a good cigar.

"Timothy, Timothy," whispered Betsy, leaning toward him, "I am so tired of life. I want to crawl into a chimney corner and nod there with my knitting and my old clay pipe."

"What about your son?" asked Timothy. "He

ought to marry soon and then you can have a corner in his house."

"My son doesn't know where I am," said Betsy Boggs, and her old eyes twinkled irrepressibly in the dark as she thought with amusement of the joke she had played on Timothy.

"Why, how is that?"

"I got tired of him and told him I was going to — California. I would write when I got there. I do write, through my lawyers. I am a crazy old woman, Timothy, without any heart at all, at all."

"Why did you get tired of him?"

"He was rich."

Timothy laughed. "If I wasn't going away, I would be glad I was poor, then, so you wouldn't grow tired of me."

"Where are you going?"

"Into the backwoods, dear. New York isn't the anteroom to hell, but hell itself to a poor man."

"Oh, Timothy, take me with you."

"I can't dear. I have no money."

"If you will take me, I will not give my money away, but will keep it."

"I can't live on my wife's money."

"Then I will give it all away, as I want to do."

"Betsy, please, dear. I will not marry you."

He tossed his cigar away nervously and came over

to her chair. "I am too old to do more than take care of myself. Don't you see?"

"How did you lose your money?"

"Speculation."

"Couldn't you save any? It seems odd that you had so much and now so little."

"I know, but — it is circumstances. I had to let every penny go."

"In the country there is no poverty."

"There will be when I get there," returned Timothy grimly. He thrust his hands into his pockets and walked to the top of the piazza steps.

"Poverty makes men, Timothy. It made you."

"Made me? Love, I am not made. I haven't a cent."

"Timothy, Timothy, 'ye have eyes to see, and see not.' "

Timothy stared a moment into the dark garden, filled with tender surprise at her estimate of him, then he returned to her chair and bent above her.

"I must go," said he. "It is getting late and I have a lot to do. It is good-by, Betsy."

"Oh, Timothy, no. Take me with you."

"I can't."

"Will you leave me here all alone?"

"Write your son where you are and get him to come and live with you."

"He isn't you, Timothy."

"Betsy," declared Timothy sternly, "I will not marry you."

"But don't you see, I want to live on a farm."

"You should have married me then many months ago, when I had money and could have afforded a wife."

"Suppose I had. We would have bought the biggest place we could find — an old colonial house, shade trees, beautiful lawns, splendid outbuildings. It would have been against human nature not to. We would have stocked the place with the finest breed of cattle, pigs, hens, horses. The house would have been too big for me alone to have managed, so we would have hired several servants and increased their number as they complained that the work was too heavy. You would have needed help, too, and for the finest breed of stock, would have got nothing but the most skilful men. You would have had to have an expert in each department, so your number of men would have increased just as my number of servants. You wouldn't have known how to oversee them, so you would have engaged an overseer about the same time I got a housekeeper. Our farm would have become an estate and we wouldn't be needed at all, personally. Our lawyers would see to the bills. We would be

just the same as I have always been. Timothy, I want to do things, things that must be done, not simply playing at housekeeping, playing at being a noble person and helping the poor. To spend your life reading other people's thoughts, looking at other people's pictures, listening to other people's music, is not culture, Timothy, though a great many fools think it is. *Doing* things that are necessary for your comfort and for that of the ones you love, thinking your own thoughts, making things that are needed with your own hands, that's true culture, living your own life, thinking, doing, hoping, worrying, struggling. Timothy, can't you see?"

"I won't marry you, Betsy Pratt."

"Timothy Payne, you're a fool."

Timothy said nothing and the old lady flushed.

"Well, why shouldn't I flare out?" she asked. "There has been nothing else I could do myself all my life. Everything but flare out has been done for me."

"Betsy, if you want to be poor, looked down upon by everybody, though everybody will strenuously deny it, give your money away. But do not come to me. For I will not marry a poor woman."

"Will you marry a rich one?"

"Not when I am poor."

"Will you ever be rich again?"

"In Heaven, perhaps."

"In hell. Riches aren't made in Heaven."

"Betsy, if we had begun younger —"

"We will never be any younger."

"I know life gives true culture — books and so forth, simply a varnish that is apt to wear off under too great pressure. But that varnish is nice to have. It does lend a smoothness to one."

"I know, Timothy. But I am varnished, I and my kind, so highly that we see nothing but our own reflections. I want to become cultured."

"Dear, I can not afford a wife."

"That is rubbish. We would have a finer race to-day, if our well-educated women had a chance to endure the hardships our great grandparents did. Pampered women mean brainless children, Timothy."

"I think so, too. You are right. But we are too old."

"I shall miss you so, Timothy."

The old man was silent, gazing into the darkness of the garden where one could just make out the dim outlines of the shrubs. Betsy also said nothing, but as she watched him a little smile came into her eyes, an idea into her mind, and she cocked her head on one side as she had a way of doing when she was up to something. The silvery chimes of the

hall clock brought Timothy once more to her side.

"It is getting late, Betsy," said he gently. "I have to go. Good-by, dear, and take care of yourself."

"My money will do that," said she, "my maid, chauffeur, housekeeper, lawyers, ad infinitum. But you be careful, Timothy, and write to me now and then."

"I will," said Timothy.

She went with him to the top of the steps and held out her soft white hand.

"Good-by, Timothy Payne."

"Good-by, Betsy Pratt."

Standing a step or two below her, he took her hand and raising it to his lips, kissed it with all of his old-time, courtly grace. Then he hurried down the steps and was lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXVI

BETSY GOES COURTING

THE sun shone in the kitchen window through the sash curtains Mrs. McAlister had left up when she went to her own home, on the kitchen table with its remains of a meal just eaten. Timothy, at one end of the table near the kitchen stove, where he could lean back and without rising, reach the teapot, simmering on the range, or the sausage, keeping warm in the frying pan, smiled across the havoc at Annie, drooping wearily in her chair at the other end.

As a companion in misfortune, Annie could hardly be called a cheerful comrade, in fact she seemed to the uninitiated, to be the misfortune. She wore a clean blue mother-hubbard. Around her waist was tied a brown-checked gingham apron. Her pale hair was neatly brushed and she was clean at least. But she was weak and sick and she lay back in her chair, her listless hands folded idly in her lap, her small, sunken eyes gazing into the depths of the sun-flecked orchard. She wanted to help but she had no initiative and simply didn't know how

to keep a house clean. The back rooms of 178 Second Avenue where she had been brought up were not clean. The family didn't have time to keep them so. They had to live, and it was too hard to do it to have any time for cleaning up. Timothy knew much more about housework, and the three days they had been there he had done it all.

"Now, Annie," he had said cheerfully, the morning after their arrival when Annie had started to pile up the breakfast dishes, "you just go outside and sit on the porch. The only cure for your trouble is no work and plenty of outdoors."

"Can't I help with the dishes?" asked Annie, not thinking of the beds. No one that Annie ever knew made beds except Mrs. Russell and Mary Fisher, and they had been looked upon as finical.

Timothy had thought of the beds and blushed.
"Now, Annie, I tell you what, you make your own bed —"

"Now?"

"Yes, I would. I think all beds are made up in the morning, as soon as they have aired. You make your bed and tidy up your room and then go out, and don't come in until I call you for dinner."

"Shan't I get the dinner?"

"No. You had better not do a thing — except — er — make your own bed and keep your room

looking nicely. You keep both your windows open, don't you, as I told you to?"

"Yes."

"Well, you keep them open, and by next winter you will be well again."

So the work had been arranged. Timothy had been so busy getting the house in running order that he had no time for outdoors, though he felt vaguely that the plowing should at least be finished by this time. He wanted to get some chickens, too, before his cash all went. If he had a cow, the milk would be good for Annie.

He was pondering these things now as he finished his dinner and with Annie's surprised permission, was leaning back in his chair, filling his pipe. He glanced across the sunlit yard to the orchard in bloom now. The grass beneath the trees was growing high and Timothy wondered if it could not be used for hay. He was glad there were so many fruit trees. He wouldn't have to touch them this year, at any rate, and could sell the fruit. But he would have to have a small vegetable garden for himself and Annie. He would hire a boy to plow a place that very afternoon. Then he remembered that the two horses he had given Mary and Mrs. Russell were being cared for at the McAlisters'.

He would go there at once and consult Mary and John about the farm. The dishes could wait.

He turned to Annie with renewed interest. After all, this job was new and independent, and the little white farmhouse under the great maples was preferable to the overcrowded horror of the East Side or to any part of the city. That orchard, white and pink and fragrant, with the deep cool grass, sun-spattered and starred with buttercups, was more beautiful than the finest park. The distant hills with the drifting cloud shadows and the warm blue sky above was beyond anything one could see on Fifth Avenue.

"God's country, eh, Annie?" he asked, taking his pipe from his mouth and nodding at the view.

"Yes," said Annie.

Some one crossed the front porch and knocked at the door into the dining-room.

"Guess that is Mary, now," said Timothy. "She has probably heard that we have come. You sit still, Annie. I shall bring her in."

He crossed the dining-room with its forlorn air of disuse, for he had spent all his time in the house either in his own room or in the kitchen cooking, and opened the door. Betsy Boggs, her head on one side like a small pup's, eyed him diffidently.

She was dressed in a simple gown of white linen, becoming to her years. There was a small black hat on her gray hair. She carried a white linen hand-bag and at her feet was a small suit-case.

“Betsy Pratt!”

“Timothy Payne!”

“I know why you have come, but I will not marry you.”

“Then we will have to live here without being married.”

“How did you get here?”

“Walked. It isn’t far from the station.”

“Why didn’t you ride?”

“I can’t afford to.”

“Betsy! For God’s sake, dear, you haven’t —”

“Yes, I have, Timothy, but for our sakes. May I come in, and then I shall tell you about it.”

Timothy stood aside in a daze and the little old lady entered, leaving the suit-case for Timothy to bring in.

“Why this room is just as cozy,” she cried. “We must open the windows. It needs to be dusted and swept. I have got the prettiest table cover! It is coming in my trunk. I have three trunks full of the dearest things. Oh, Timothy, we shall have fun. Where have you eaten since you came? In the kitchen?”

She walked to the door and glanced in.

"Who is our young friend?" she asked with a gay nod for the listless girl at the table.

"She is Annie Rosenbloom, now, dear. She has tuberculosis," explained Timothy. "Annie, this is Mrs. Pratt, a friend of mine, come to see how we are getting along."

"All right," said Annie.

"She is not a neighbor then?" asked Betsy returning to the dining-room.

"No. She lives here with me. I met her when I was enjoying that Heaven you advocate — no money."

"I have no money," said she.

"What did you do with it?"

"Gave it away."

"To whom?"

"To my son."

She had wandered into the big low parlor with its many windows, and Timothy followed her. The room, with its woodwork all painted white, with its shiny air-tight stove and quaint, old-fashioned furniture, was cozy and distinctly attractive. Betsy nodded with satisfaction and walked to one of the windows. Timothy opened it for her, letting in the warm sweet fragrance of early summer.

"Ah, Timothy, we shall be happy here."

"Windemere was beautiful."

"I know, but it was all made beauty. A bush here, because it looked well. A tree there for the effect. All for effect, every spear of grass, every flower."

"What have you done with the place?"

"Sold it."

"So quickly?"

"Some friends of mine have wanted to buy it for a long time but I wouldn't let them have it. It was the only retreat I had where I could indulge in the luxury of being old. Then you came, Timothy, and I stayed old."

"What did you do with the money?"

"Gave every cent to my son. I suppose you think I might as well have given it to the poor while I was about it."

"I am glad you didn't. Your son will return it. I am going to take you back to him."

"Timothy!"

"Betsy, I will not marry you. I can not afford a wife."

"You can afford Annie."

"Whatever poverty she suffers here, will be wealth to what she has known."

"You and Annie need a chaperon."

"I would to God, for Annie's sake, that we did. Come and get something to eat before we go. Dinner is late because I am a poor hand at getting it until I get on the job."

"I had lunch in the city before I left. I am not hungry."

"Then if you aren't too tired, we can make that half past three train."

"I want to stay here."

"Dear, I can not let you."

Betsy Boggs straightened her hat in front of the glass over the mantelpiece, rubbed the dust from her nose and chin with her handkerchief, picked up her dainty white hand-bag and turned to Timothy.

"I am ready," said she.

"I shall get my hat," said Timothy, "and tell Annie not to touch the dishes."

The two old people walked along in silence, Timothy carrying the suit-case and Betsy busy keeping the already dusty hem of her white linen dress as clean as possible. Timothy watched her half amused, half vexed.

"You see how hard it is to be poor. If you had a motor-car, your skirt would be clean."

"And my muscles flabby. Wealthy American women, and men too, have a tendency to too little exercise. They keep well-dressed and spotless at

the cost of obesity, gout, weak ankles and internal troubles."

"Betsy!"

Again they fell silent, tramping along the dusty road, the stubborn, upright old man, and the small, determined old woman who had never before been thwarted in her desires.

At the station as they stood waiting for the train, Betsy asked about his horses, who was keeping them. Timothy told her and explained that Mary McAlister had lived at the farm before she married the minister. Betsy persuaded him not to go to the city with her, and thinking of the horses and plowing and all the hundred of things to be seen to, he consented simply to put her on the train.

He walked slowly back to the farm, but it seemed lonely and dreary now, and Annie inexpressibly miserable. He was blue and decided that he would postpone work until to-morrow. That was the beauty about farming, he decided, days when you weren't disposed to work, you didn't have to work. He saw the skirt of Annie's dress hanging from the hammock and knew she was there asleep, probably, so he slipped around the house to the orchard and spent the afternoon lying on his back, smoking and gazing up into the mass of snowy bloom above him.

They were at breakfast next morning when a

cart rattled up to the side door. It was after eight, for Timothy had decided not to begin strenuous hours until he had a cow and chickens and things in fairly good running order. Besides, it took him a long time to get breakfast ready, and Annie spent hours now over her toilet since the first morning when, appearing with unbrushed hair, Timothy had gently but firmly impressed it upon her that people always did up their hair before breakfast. Timothy went to the door and found an express cart drawn up to the steps and a man unloading the three trunks it contained. He was about to stop the fellow and explain that those trunks must be returned to the station, when he remembered that he did not know Betsy's new address now that she had left Windemere, didn't know who her lawyers were or where her son lived, and realized with chagrin how little he did know about his Betsy. He would in all probability hear from her in a day or two and he could return the trunks then. He helped the man carry them into the dining-room, paid him and watched him drive away, down the dusty road, through the morning sunlight, wishing that Betsy was there beside him instead of simply her trunks. Well, he would go and get the horses, consult McAlister and see to the plowing. Betsy would be happier in the city and he had no time to mourn.

He piled the dishes in the sink with a stern command to Annie that she was simply to tidy her room and then lie down in the hammock again all the morning, got his modish expensive panama and started up the road, looking, in his silk shirt and made-to-order suit, like a gentleman out for a stroll instead of a farmer going about his morning's work.

The McAlisters lived beyond the railroad; one took the road to the station to reach their farm. Half-way to the station he met Betsy Boggs. Save for a black silk parasol, she was dressed the same as the day before. It was warm, and her face was flushed, her forehead damp.

"Good morning," said she. "Have my trunks come?"

"No," snapped Timothy.

"Don't lie to me, Timothy Payne," said she.

"You see what I am," said Timothy. "I have no regard for truth at all."

"Neither have I," said she. "Were you coming to meet me?"

"No. I thought you were in New York. I am going for my horses."

"To Mr. McAlister's? He is the minister, you said. I shall come too."

"No," roared Timothy. "We have no license."

"I have one. I just got it." She pulled up her dainty hand-bag by its long silk cord, opened it, took out a handkerchief, a small purse —

"That will do," said Timothy, interrupting her proceedings. "I believe you."

He turned abruptly and started back to the house.

"Where are you going?" asked Betsy, hurrying after him.

"Home," growled Timothy.

"I shall come too," said Betsy. "We can telephone Mr. McAlister."

"A poor farmer can not afford the luxury of a telephone."

"You can go for him, then, while I wait in the house."

Again Timothy turned and started up the road in the other direction, toward the station.

"Where are you going now?" asked Betsy, pausing in the dust to watch him, parasol aslant over one shoulder.

"I am going to take you to the station and put you on the train for New York."

"You did that yesterday and it didn't do any good."

"I am going to New York with you."

"You won't be able to afford the trip every day, Timothy."

Timothy stopped and turned on her. "Betsy, this isn't nice. It isn't womanly."

"I wasn't brought up to be womanly," said Betsy, "simply a lady."

"I will not marry you."

"All right. Not to-day, probably, but to-morrow."

She bowed graciously and started up the road toward the station. Timothy hastened after her.

"Can I put you on the train?" he asked humbly.

"No, thank you," said she. "I am not going to the city. I can't afford the trip every day either."

"Where are you going?"

"To Mrs. McAlister's for the night."

Timothy stopped. "I—I can't go there with you, dear. I do not—er—dare to."

"No," said she. "Don't bother. I can find the way."

Again she bowed graciously and Timothy stood watching her, bobbing up the long dusty road, between the meadows and the orchards, a small figure almost completely hidden by her black silk parasol.

Timothy returned home but he could not work. He was nervous and harassed. He didn't know what Betsy would do or say next and the uncertainty filled him with fear and restlessness. Every

time he heard a wagon, he started fearfully lest it was the little old lady returning with some new plan. He did not dare to start about his much neglected business, to find a boy to do the late plowing, a cow for sale and chickens he could buy, lest she should steal a flank movement on him and come when he was out. What she could possibly do in his absence, he did not know, but he trusted her to be able to do something that would draw the strings tighter. She was determined to marry him and he knew perfectly well that she would do so before they had done with it. When he had finished the dishes and fixed his room, he prowled around the yard, not wanting to disturb Annie, and yet fearing to get out of sight of the front gate. He tried to smoke, but was too nervous to enjoy it. He forgot dinner entirely, and Annie, too sick to care to eat, dozed on in the hammock and did not remind him. At last the suspense became intolerable. He could stand it no longer, and about three he snatched up his hat and started out for the minister's.

He found Mary in the front yard, weeding the garden. Her face beneath the dainty sunbonnet, made with the grace Mary knew so well how to use when she had the time and the material, looked ten years younger. Her cheeks were flushed with

health, her eyes bright and her mouth, strong and sweet and womanly, was curving now in laughter over something Annie's child had said, for the little girl, bareheaded, barefooted, clean and rosy, was toddling after her, hugging a great rag doll around its neck with one fat chubby arm. At the sight of Timothy, Mary hurried forward, pulling off her garden gloves.

"Timothy," she cried gaily. "It is good to see you. Come on in. We have been waiting for you."

She held out her hand and the child peered eagerly around her skirts. Timothy shook hands and glanced nervously at the house. No one was in sight.

"You are looking well, Mary," said he.

Mary nodded. "I am feeling fine. What do you think of the baby?" and she drew the child tenderly forward.

Timothy praised the baby and lifting the little thing in his arms, turned to walk to the house beside Mary.

"Why were you — er — expecting me?" he asked diffidently.

"Mrs. Pratt is here and she said you would come a little after four, when you had opened the house.

You two must let Nannie and me come and help you get settled."

"Oh, yes, certainly, thanks," stammered Timothy. So she had given him until four, had she? He glanced at the gracious well-poised woman beside him who had gone through the fight of life and come out with her sweetness and graciousness stamped as genuine by the seal of the Master, and wondered what she would think about his marriage.

"You may — er — think I am — er — old —" he stammered with all the youthful embarrassment of one and twenty.

Mary laughed. "I do not, Timothy," she declared. "'The best is yet to be.'"

They were sitting alone on the porch steps that evening, Timothy Payne and his wife Betsy, while the evening darkened into night. The frogs from a neighboring pond raised a shrill chirping as slowly the woods, the fields, the near-by fences disappeared and the stars overhead, seen through the maple boughs, appeared, one by one. From the barn behind the house they could hear the occasional stamping of the horses. McAlister was going to get them three cows in the morning and some chickens for which the watch and the cut-glass toilet articles were to pay. He was also going to send a

man around to help with the plowing. The farm was a good one and could certainly be made to pay, growing better every year with right handling, McAlister had declared and Timothy vowed, there in the dark, that he would make it pay and be independent and happy at last. He put his hand into his wife's lap, groping in the dark for hers.

"We shall be happy, won't we, dear?" she asked, slipping her hand into his.

And Timothy replied as Mary had done that afternoon, "'The best is yet to be.'"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE WISDOM OF DOBBINS

REGGIE worked hard all the morning to ease the dull ache in his brain and to stop thinking of that notice in the papers, which subconsciously he was constantly thinking about. Between consultations, business interviews, letters read and answers dictated, the old struggle kept up, over and over, his love for Helen warring with what he felt he owed in loyalty to Timothy.

Helen should not ask him to give the old man up. He had proved that Timothy's society was not detrimental to him. Helen was not only unfair, but deliberately blind. He dictated a letter, picked up another and held it a moment idly as he thought how anxious Helen had always been about him. She was not blind nor unfair, simply lovingly, if unnecessarily anxious, and the more she loved him, the more foolishly anxious she would be. That was the way with women. The more they loved, the less they could reason. She loved him and he loved her and she was going away, leaving him alone, absolutely alone.

He glanced at the letter he held, dictated an answer and thought of Timothy and under what circumstances they had joined forces. He remembered Timothy's words that the relationship could not last, something would arise to separate them. He remembered his own angry passionate appeal, a veritable cry for help, that had brought Timothy's reluctant consent. Timothy was old and had nothing but a pride that over-topped the highest skyscraper. If he suggested that they should part, the old man would agree at once, readily, cheerfully, and would leave, refusing to take a cent. Reggie knew him. No, not even for Helen could he cast Timothy off. He was the one who had made the arrangement and he must endure it.

He picked up another letter, stared at it and realized the terrible vacuum the world would be without Helen. All these months, though he had not seen her, they had been in the same city, were near each other with always the possibility of a chance encounter. He knew in a general way what she was doing and he had never quite given up hope that she would call him on the telephone some day. But now she was leaving him for good, going out of his life completely. What had she said about what he owed her? She had cared for him and had watched and worried over him for

twelve years. They had been boy and girl together. Why should a stranger, an old man from the lower East Side, come between them? Did not those years of the past, happy and unhappy, have some claim on him? Did he not owe her loyalty as well as to Timothy? Certainly he did.

He slowly read the letter he held and saw himself when Timothy came into his life. He had been sinking, sinking, into the fathomless depths of the mire, alone, deserted, driven, like an animal at bay. No decent woman would look at him. The harpies on the streets were clinging to him, reaching out their sin-blackened arms to drag him down, to strip him bare and fling him aside. He had nowhere to turn, no one to go to, even the simple Monty and the affected Willie preferred to cross the street if they saw him coming. Helen had been willing to pray for him, but so would the first devout stranger he might meet and ask that service of. She had stood aloft, holding the skirts of her dainty soul aside lest his reaching, groping, despairing hands touch and soil the hem. Her prayers had been without faith or she would have known that they would be answered and would have stood by him, proudly, gladly. Prayers without faith were mere words, evaporating into air as soon as uttered. And then he had met Timothy, Timothy old and

poor and drunk, but a gentleman, kind, indomitable, with the knowledge of the ages in his gray head, the brooding tenderness of a father in his sunken eyes, the jaunty indifference of a boy in his carriage, in his jovial, good-natured, whimsical soul.

Reggie crushed the letter in his hand, then aware that his stenographer was patiently waiting, watching him in faint surprise, he smoothed it out and laid it aside.

"That will do this morning, Miss Bains," said he, glancing at his watch. "It is nearly twelve. I have an engagement and won't be back to-day. You get these letters off and copy those papers in the Dillingham case this afternoon. I shall look them over to-morrow."

Alone he paced the floor in a hopeless endeavor to fight this thing to a finish, to kill for good one set of arguments, no matter which. This constant indecision was wearing him to a wreck, driving him mad. But he could not do in an hour what he had been incapable of accomplishing in three months, and at the end of that time he decided to go to Helen again, to show her how foolish her loving anxiety was, to prove to her all that Timothy had done for him. It was the lunch hour, but he did not care. He must speak to the girl and settle it then, settle it once and for all. She had refused to see

him, but to-day was different. She was going away to-morrow and if she had ever loved him she would see him this last day. If she refused — she couldn't refuse. They loved each other.

The butler ushered him into the reception room and went to announce him to Miss Maynard who was at lunch, as he had surmised. Alone, Reggie crushed his hands into his pockets and sought to quiet the twitching of his lips. Would she see him? If she refused, it would prove beyond doubt that she no longer cared for him.

The butler had hardly gone before he heard the light step he knew so well, and Helen paused in the doorway. At the sight of her after the long three months of loneliness, the blood rushed into Reggie's white face. He sprang forward, his hands out.

"Helen," he cried, with half a laugh.

The girl stepped farther into the room and drew the curtains behind her. She too had flushed and now she was trembling as with a chill, while the color slowly ebbed from her face. She was going to-morrow for good, would he let her go? Did he still care more for a stranger than he did for her who had helped him face his childish troubles, had shared in his boyish triumphs? Was she herself, her looks, her heart, her all, to be thrown

aside for another? Must she leave him to face the emptiness she had fiercely fought the last three months because he cared for this other? White and quivering she faced him, her eyes dark with the anguish of a jealous woman. She raised her hand to keep him back a moment.

"Wait," said she. "Timothy—"

He pushed her hand aside and crushed her to him. "Timothy is nothing to me, nothing," he vowed in the rush of his longing. "Oh, Helen, you are everything, everything."

He bent his face to her hair as he strained her to him and she heard him catch his breath in a sob. She slipped her arms around his neck and looked into his drawn face, half timidly, wholly dazed by his sudden surrender.

"You will give him up for me?" she whispered.

"I will give up everything I own or believe for you, beloved, Timothy, my mother, my God—"

"Hush," she crooned and stopped his words with her own lips, soft and moist and tremulous.

When Reggie began to think again, it was late in the evening. He had just left Helen at her door after a long day in the country and had hurried home to dress and return to the Maynards' to dinner. Helen had promised to postpone her trip for a month, when, married, they two would take it

together. Quivering with happiness, eager to tell some one, Reggie rushed up-stairs to find his confidant of the last three years, hardly conscious yet of the terms on which he had made peace with Helen. The butler's announcement that Timothy had left for a few days in the country brought him up with a bit of a shock, as a child feels when, returning home filled with adventures to tell, he finds his mother out. He took the note the butler handed him and felt a sudden twinge of shame as he remembered that he would have to turn the old man out. He flushed angrily and hurried on to his room, determined not to question his actions, now at least.

In his own room, he read the note, standing before the dresser. Dobbins, busy in the bathroom, glanced in and then immediately withdrew. Reggie finished the note and sat down on the bed, and drearily reread it, his mind in a daze.

"Dear Van, I found out what was the matter between you and Helen. It came to me this morning like an inspiration. You are a man, son, and I am proud of you. Our arrangement was foolish and illogical. I have taken definite steps to dissolve it. Call on my lawyers to-morrow at ten and they will explain. Then go to the station and see Helen off. She promised me to see you, and then of course it will be all right. You should not have let me stand between you and her. We have been

good pals, but a man's best pal should be his wife.

"TIMOTHY MARSHALL PAYNE."

"P. S. Don't try to look me up. I shall let you know in a day or so where I am located."

"She promised me." Then he must have called on Helen that morning with the directness of an old man to find out what the trouble was and she had told him, had hurt him—an old man—beyond healing, and then Reggie himself had betrayed him, had cast him aside for a woman who didn't know the meaning of the word loyalty! Oh, Timothy! Oh, God! Oh, Helen!

He dropped the note between his feet and buried his face in his hands. Dobbins opened the door softly, peered in discreetly and once more withdrew. And still Reggie sat there, forgetful of all but what he had done, realizing that his love for Timothy was like the love for a father and that he had betrayed that love and that there was no woman worthy the price of his loyalty to his friend and least of all the woman who could demand it as the price of her surrender. Again Dobbins appeared, hesitated a moment and then coughed gently to attract attention. Reggie glanced up, stared a second and then rose.

"Ah, Dobbins."

"If you are dining out, sir," said Dobbins, "it is time to dress. It is late."

Reggie nodded. "Yes," said he, "directly."

He picked up the note and smoothed it out. "I shall be there directly, Dobbins. My—er—doll is stuffed with sawdust. I have just discovered the fact and it has bowled me over."

He looked at his man with a wan smile. For the third time in his life he realized that Dobbins was probably a human being as well as a servant.

"They all are, sir," said Dobbins. "We have simply got to learn to love the sawdust."

Reggie nodded. "You're right," said he. "I guess we all must, sooner or later."

"Yes, if we want to love something," declared Dobbins grimly.

Reggie nodded and slipped off his coat with a vague feeling that maybe he and Helen would be happier now that he realized their equality, both stuffed with sawdust, Helen as well as himself.

He went to the lawyers next morning and received all the papers that comprised Timothy's one-time fortune, as he knew he would. Van Sant said nothing about the farm or the old man's whereabouts and neither did Reggie, for he could know nothing about the farm until Timothy should send him the mortgage to sign, and he knew Timothy would reveal his present abode in a day or two.

Neither Helen nor Reggie mentioned the old man

when they were together, Reggie from a sense of guilt, of mutual shame that they two should have cast him off, Helen because she felt that Reggie did not care to discuss the case, feeling in her great happiness that she had probably been unjust, that it was possible that she had been wrong. Reggie began to wonder why she permitted herself to marry him simply because he had reformed. His past must have stamped him physically as she had once told him, quite frankly. His moral reformation couldn't make him physically whole. But he put the thought aside lest he grow into the habit of finding fault with her now. She was simply weaker than she thought herself to be and with the slightest excuse, his reform, her beliefs and principles had gone down before her love. He must remember that she too, like himself, was weak and to be cherished.

The week passed and still Reggie heard nothing from Timothy, but he got a letter from his mother, postmarked New York. It had been sent to the house instead of the office and Reggie, surprised at the postmark, read it just before he left for the Maynards' for dinner. It was a warm sticky evening. All the windows were open and still the room was oppressive. The electric fan seemed merely to keep the warm air in irritating circulation, a

sorry apology for a country breeze blowing over meadow lands. Reggie went to the window for whatever freshness the night could afford and tore open the letter, wondering in what foul hole Timothy was sweltering just then.

"Dear Reggie," the letter ran with his mother's usual charming and quite irresponsible disregard for facts. "Well, I am home at last, and by that I don't mean simply back in this delightful hash of the nations, but really home, the first home I have known since mother died. Excuse me, dear, or rather, forgive me. I suppose it was my place to have made the home, not yours. Well, I have made one now and it is yours whenever you want it. I am giving you all my worldly goods, Reggie. It is so much nicer to do it now and not feel that you are waiting for my empty shoes, not you, maybe, but possibly Helen. They would fit her better anyway. My lawyers will call and tell you all about it. It is a wedding present, dear, as I notice in the papers that Helen has forgiven you.

"My husband has more than enough for both. We are so happy, sonny, we have decided to give all our superfluous cash away and so run no risk of wrecking our home with too much money. Home means an air-tight stove on a winter's evening, two old, rush-bottomed rocking-chairs, two pairs of slippers feet on the fender, and nothing to do until to-morrow. Come and see us as soon as you can and bring Helen. We want to welcome our new daughter, my man and I. Mother."

Amused that as usual there was no date or address on the letter, he slipped it into his pocket, and

glancing out over the myriad lights of the city, forgot his mother in thoughts of Timothy. Every one happy, every one being married, only the old man out there, alone and miserable, not wanted by any one but himself and he had betrayed him. His car drew up at the curb below. He turned from his bitter musings and tossing his mother's letter on the table, he remembered how she, too, had wanted him to get rid of the old man. Now, she was happily married, but what of Timothy?

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALL'S WELL

“**S**HE didn’t like Timothy, either,” said he to Helen that evening after dinner.

She looked at him quickly, growing suddenly pale at the accusation implied, and drew back hurt, but Reggie was not noticing her and with the insight of her sex, she saw that if she withdrew now, it would be the end. Reggie, she realized, had changed, and though he loved her still, would never again ask to be taken back, considering her notions mere childish whims. It was her turn now to do the clinging.

“ Neither of you knew him,” went on Reggie, reproachfully. “ He was a gentleman, Helen, from his backbone to his shirt-front. You judged him all wrong, and now he has gone, has left me without a word, dropped out of my life completely. He left everything behind him, went just as he came, poor and old and alone. It was like him. You do not know how fine he is. This ought to prove that he didn’t care for my money, didn’t live with me because of it, but just because he loved me and I loved and needed him.”

"It does prove it," whispered the girl. "I was wrong."

"Yes," agreed Reggie, frankly unimpressed by her avowal, "you were, dear. After this leave such things to me. I shall do the judging."

When he entered his office next morning, he found at his great mahogany desk, tilted back to catch the breeze from the windows, reading the papers, Timothy, cool, well-dressed, a sprig of apple blossoms in his buttonhole. Reggie stared, his hat on the back of his head, the door behind him still open. Then he slammed it shut and sprang forward.

"Timothy, you rascal, you unmitigated scoundrel. Don't you know any better than to do as you have done? Great heavens, what do you take me for? A stone, a hitching-post?"

"I am only up for the morning, on business," explained Timothy as they shook hands.

"What business? A gold mine? You're looking fine."

"This is the same suit I went away in," said Timothy as Reggie pushed him back into his chair. "My wife keeps it —"

"My wife? Great guns, Tim, did you elope?"

"I am married," stammered Timothy, and blushed furiously.

"Ye gods! And I have practically cried myself to sleep nights, fretting about you. Never again, never again! Who is she?"

"That Mrs. Pratt, of Long Island. We are living on my farm, your farm rather, but I want the place and I have a mortgage here I want you to sign—"

Reggie took the mortgage waiting for his signature and calmly tore it up. "Now see here, Tim. You have been my broker practically for the last three years. I have gone over those papers you have left and I have found that you have not only returned every cent I lent you, but you have doubled that part of my capital by the clever way you handled those investments, which we shall call mine. You were my business man. I therefore owe you a fee, a certain per cent. Now wait. This is straight legitimate business. I owe you this money for your services. I have deducted—to save you the trouble, for I knew you would immediately do it if I didn't—what your living expenses have been these last three years, and the rest I have put in the bank in your name. It is yours by every right. You have made money for me and have therefore earned this fee, fairly and squarely, as one business man dealing with another."

Timothy took the bank-book in a daze, read the

amount deposited, thought a moment and then glanced up. "Where is the check book?"

Reggie pushed it across the desk to him. He opened it and began to make out a check.

"Now see here," expostulated Reggie, "if you make a check out to me for that amount—"

"Hold on," said Timothy. "I am only paying you three thousand for the farm." He pulled out the check and handed it to Reggie. "Now we are square. You can send me the title deeds. Van Sant has them and will fix them up."

"I thought you were going to give it all to me. Who taught you sense, Tim? Your wife?"

"Too much money," declared Timothy, unaware that he had already begun matrimonial plagiarism, "too much money is as bad as too little. Van, I wish you would take the rest of this money—"

"Not on your life. Now, Tim, I have explained—"

"Yes, but I want an annuity. You buy me one with this money and then I shall always be sure of enough, and we can have a hired girl and a hired man."

Timothy wanted Reggie to come out and see the place that day, but Reggie had arranged with Helen to take lunch down-town and go afterward and get

the license and he knew she would be hurt if he put it off. "I shall always have to put her before him now that I have once begun," he thought with the usual sick shame that he had betrayed his friend. He promised however to be out the next day and he went with Timothy to the station and saw him on his train with repeated vows not to forget to turn up at the farm bright and early the next morning.

Helen met him at Sherry's with a certain suppressed excitement in her manner that amused Reggie. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks flushed. She was grave and gay by turns, now elated, now, not depressed but a trifle frightened. Reggie thought it was because of the nature of their errand after luncheon and smiled at her reassuringly.

"It won't take long," he whispered. "The misery is soon over, the operation, harmless, if a bit embarrassing."

"How do you know?" she teased.

"Through succoring by my presence other unfortunates like myself," he smiled back.

She laughed and changed the subject, chatting gaily of this and that, of where they would go and what they would see. At the marriage bureau, her excitement, Reggie noticed, did not increase, nor when they had obtained the license and departed, did it decrease. She kept watching him

with inscrutable eyes, and would sink into long periods of abstraction, during which she seemed pondering some weighty question and not quite able to make up her mind whether to take it seriously or lightly. Her eyes occasionally dwelt so kindly, so tenderly on Reggie, he knew it had something to do with him and became curious.

"What's the matter, Helen?" he asked at last, as they were rolling up-town. "What have you been up to now?"

"Nothing," said she, and turned her eyes away, flushing slightly.

"Helen," reproachfully.

Then she turned to him and spoke, slowly, diffidently. "Reggie, I—I have heard something about Timothy."

"I have seen him," said Reggie gleefully. "I was going to tell you about it when we got home." And he told of the morning's encounter and of the promise to go to the farm next day and see the place. "Will you go with me, Helen?" he asked gently.

"Reggie, do—do you know he is—er—married?"

Reggie laughed. "Yes, the old rascal. He told me all about it."

"Told you who she is?"

"Certainly. She is a Mrs. Pratt, of Long Island, an old lady he has called on all winter. He met her during one of our hunts last fall."

"Did he say so?"

"Certainly," said Reggie, flushing angrily, the tone of her voice implying that Timothy was not telling the truth, was concealing something at least. "Yes, he did, Helen, and he ought to know."

"Reggie, he has married—" she hesitated, flushing and biting her lip. Her triumph was so near, her judgment of the old man to be vindicated at last, that she put it off a moment lest she show too plainly how pleased she was to be proved right when she knew the knowledge would hurt Reggie in his love for the old man.

"Mrs. Pratt," said Reggie crossly.

"Your mother, Reggie."

"My mother! Great—Helen, this is unkind in you. My mother has been in Europe for a year now. Who told you such a lie?"

"It isn't a lie—though, for your sake, I wish it were."

"Who told you?"

"Willie and Monty. Oh, Reggie it will be all over town before night! I met them this morning as I was going into Sherry's just before you came. It seems they were just back from a week-end in

the country. They say they were going by a small place in Connecticut, just a little ways over the state line, when their motor broke down and they stopped at a farmhouse for something to eat while their man was mending the car. And, Reggie, it was Timothy's farm. Timothy wasn't there, but your mother was, and a sick girl. Your mother had them in and made much of them as she always does, you know. They say they never saw her so delightful and jolly before. She said that she and Timothy were married —"

"That will do, Helen. It is a lie of those two —" he stopped, white and choking, to rush on after a moment. "Why, Timothy has refused all my aid. Do you think he is so nasty as to do it simply as a bluff and then go and marry my mother, a wealthy woman? He is too fine, too honorable. Besides, my mother does not know him. She has never seen him. She has been in Europe —"

"She has come back. You said so yourself, Reggie."

"But she only came back the other day, Helen, and then she was married. Why, listen, she has married a man who is so wealthy, she has given all her money to me, every cent. She says she does not need it, and she hates to feel that I am waiting for her shoes."

"So, if Timothy has married her, he has not taken her money," said Helen gently, trying to alleviate the pain she saw in his eyes, willing to put aside her triumph now to lessen his hurt.

"But he hasn't married her, Helen. I know him. He wouldn't do such a thing. Why, they would have to be poor, and Timothy knows poverty enough not to allow my mother to suffer it. We will go there right now and I will prove that you are wrong again. We can spend the night at the farm. We will telephone your mother so she won't worry and Timothy's wife can lend you a night-gown."

"But, Reggie—"

"There is no but, Helen. We are going to settle this lie once and for all."

He spoke to the chauffeur. The man nodded and the car turned toward Broadway and the open country.

The little white house under the maples looked cool and inviting, with doors and windows opened. There was a hammock, there were a few lounging-chairs, gay with cushions, and there was a bright rug on the porch. A cat basked contentedly in the sunshine and a dog slept peacefully on the gravel driveway. The grass was bright with dandelions, a few lilacs still clung to the great bushes near the

house, and the birds kept up a constant argument in the thick shade of the maple boughs. In the field across the road, a tall youth was doing some late plowing, and somewhere off in the distance a little brook babbled and sang.

As the car turned in at the gate, Timothy, busy in the barn, saw it and came out to meet his guests. He wore a pair of overalls, brand-new, and a large straw hat. His thin face was flushed with exercise and he was visibly proud of his possessions, the house, the fields and his wife.

"Now, this is good of you, Van," he cried as they shook hands. "And of Miss Maynard, too. I was hardly expecting the good luck of a visit from you," turning to the girl. "Betsy and I know how busy you must be just at present."

"Betsy?" asked Reggie with an odd sinking in his heart. Betsy was his mother's name, but it couldn't be the same Betsy. It couldn't. And he glanced defiantly at Helen, who flushed but dared not meet his eyes.

"My wife," said Timothy proudly. "She will be glad to see you. That is my field," he added, waving toward the youth across the road. "It is a bit late for plowing, but I plan to raise nothing but potatoes this year, and a truck garden, for Betsy

and me. But come in. I want you to meet my wife."

He helped Helen from the car and led the way proudly to the side door, explaining that Annie was asleep on the front porch and they never used that entrance in the daytime for they did not like to disturb her.

"Your hired girl?" asked Reggie, striving to fight off his fear by jocularity.

"You ought to remember Annie," said Timothy, glancing mischievously at Reggie. Their eyes met and Reggie laughed.

"I do," said he. Surely Timothy couldn't have married his mother or he would not be so self-possessed when he expected the fact to be at once disclosed. He would say something about it in some way. The whole thing was absurd. Reggie glanced at Helen as Timothy ushered them into the parlor, and saw that she too was thinking the same thing, that she was beginning to waver in her belief, wondering if Willie and Monty had been up to another one of their senseless jokes.

The sitting-room was cool and delightful with great bowls of flowers everywhere and all the windows, gay with curtains, open to the summer sunshine. But the first thing Reggie saw was an air-

tight stove and he thought in sudden panic of his mother and her definition of home. Timothy hurried out to call his wife, and Reggie dared not look at Helen. The girl knew nothing about his mother's definition, but he was afraid she would see the fear in his eyes if they met hers. He glanced away and his eye fell on a small picture on the wall between the two front windows, his mother's favorite picture of the Madonna and Child. But this was impossible, absurd. His mother had been in Europe all the winter.

Then Timothy's wife came in followed by Timothy. Reggie dared not look at Helen, while an expression of blank incredulity swept all other emotion from his face and mind.

Betsy wore a long blue apron, her sleeves were rolled up, her hands were covered with flour, and there was a spot of the same stuff on one eyebrow and some on her cheek. She was flushed with her labors and the heat of the kitchen, but her eyes were bright, her whimsical mouth puckering for a laugh at the faces of the two young people, Reggie's white with despair, Helen's flushed with the joy of vindication and the pain of seeing Reggie suffer. Betsy's hair was quite white now and she was frankly wrinkled, jolly and old and fat.

"Well, son?"

"Mother!"

Reggie looked at Timothy, but one glimpse of the old man's face absolved him from all complicity. He was white, and the miserable drawn look had come again about his mouth, and into his eyes the pain of a man's wounded honor. He had scorned to touch Reggie's money, but he had married Reggie's mother. What could any one think of him but the worst?

"Betsy," he moaned. "I did not know, I did not guess —"

"Of course you didn't, Timothy," said Betsy gently, her eyes dwelling lovingly on her man. "You thought me a Pratt, but I was a Boggs."

"But, dear, people will say —"

"Timothy, Timothy, a man of your age and caring still about 'people'! I had to give away all my money before I could coerce you into marrying me, love. Reggie knows that for a fact. He has the papers."

"Yes, I have the papers," said Reggie dully. He should have guessed. His mother was always doing things like this that upset one completely for at least a day, always saying she was going places she never went, turning up in Oshkosh when one thought her in Budapest. Slowly the shock diminished and his eyes began to twinkle irrepressibly.

"But, mother, what did you do it for?"

"You ought to be pleased, Reggie," said his mother reproachfully. "I have made Timothy your really, truly father, now."

"Pleased?" Reggie threw his arm around Timothy's bent shoulders. "We *are* pleased. Aren't we—dad? But why the mystery, mother?"

"For fun at first, for matrimony later, when I grew to love your father and knew perfectly well he wouldn't marry me if he knew who I was. Do you wish it undone, Timothy Payne?"

"God forbid," said Timothy Payne, kissing her hand.

Betsy turned to Helen with demure eyes. "I thought," said she primly, "that it was high time Reggie's mother married his — father."

THE END







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